

A Marxist Critique of East and West

Jan Lavrinovski

All rights reserved

Contents

The Betrayal of the Proletariat.....	1
Capitalism's Mask: Freedom and Power in Western Democracies.....	8
Stalinism Unmasked: The Perverted Legacy of Revolution.....	15
Africa's Red Illusion: From Socialist Pledges to Authoritarian Persistence.....	22
Post-1990: The Colors Change but the Chains Remain.....	30
The Myth of Progress: Capital and Control in the Global South.....	37
The Return to Marx and Engels: Reclaiming Socialism for the Future.....	44
Sources.....	51

The Betrayal of the Proletariat

The modern world, split between capitalist democracies and authoritarian regimes that call themselves socialist, has strayed so far from the revolutionary vision of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels that their original message is barely recognizable beneath the weight of distortion, co-option, and betrayal. In an era where the working class is globally dispossessed, ruled either by corporate oligarchs or party bureaucrats, it is necessary to return to the foundations of scientific socialism—not merely as a critique of injustice, but as a coherent, materialist alternative to the world as it stands.

Marx and Engels wrote not from the perch of abstract philosophy, but from within the furnace of industrial capitalism. The core of their analysis lies in the theory of class struggle, the recognition that history is not shaped by ideas alone, nor by moral progress, but by material conditions and the conflicts that emerge between social classes over the control of labor, production, and the means of life. As they state plainly in *The Communist Manifesto*, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” This struggle is not metaphorical. It is the real engine of history, expressed in the antagonism between slave and master, serf and lord, worker and capitalist. Every political form, every economic system, every culture is ultimately rooted in how societies produce and distribute their material wealth—and who controls that process.

From this perspective, Marx and Engels developed what they called “scientific socialism.” Unlike the romantic utopians of the early nineteenth century, who dreamed of harmonious societies born from moral awakening or communal experiments, Marx and Engels rejected speculation and idealism. Their socialism was not built on wishes but on an empirical analysis of capitalism itself. In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Engels argued that socialism is not a dream to be gifted by enlightened rulers or born from the charity of the rich. It must arise from the contradictions within capitalism, from the very conditions that create the working class, and from the revolutionary potential of that class to overthrow its exploiters.

Scientific socialism does not merely oppose capitalism’s cruelty; it reveals its internal system. Capitalism depends on wage labor—a system where workers are free in form, but bound in substance, forced to sell their labor to survive. The capitalist owns the means of production, while the worker owns only their capacity to labor. This relationship, rooted in exploitation, is obscured by the language of “freedom,” “contracts,” and “markets.” But Marx, especially in *Capital, Volume I*, unmask this process: the worker produces value greater than what they are paid, and that surplus—the foundation of profit—is appropriated by the capitalist class. The result is a society where a minority accumulates vast wealth, while the majority lives at the edge of economic insecurity.

Scientific socialism, then, is a method of understanding society through its real material relations, not through religious ideals, national myths, or abstract principles. It traces the laws

of motion of capitalism, identifies the contradictions that will drive its transformation, and places its hopes not in saviors or slogans but in the self-emancipation of the proletariat. It aims at the abolition of class society altogether—not the replacement of one ruling class with another, but the destruction of the very conditions that make class division possible. This means not simply changing ownership, but changing the structure of social relations: no private control over production, no coercive state power above the people, and no hierarchy of wealth or authority rooted in exploitation.

Marx and Engels never envisioned socialism as a centralized bureaucratic regime or a tightly managed dictatorship in the name of the working class. Their vision was of a world where the state would “wither away,” where free association and collective ownership would replace coercion and alienation. They believed that the working class, once conscious of its position and power, would abolish the existing order and build a society in which labor was not a burden but a form of creative freedom.

But that vision has been buried—by the forces of capital in the West and by authoritarian rulers in the East who speak Marx’s name but mock his ideals. The chapters ahead will examine how that betrayal unfolded, how the capitalist and Stalinist paths both led away from the real promise of socialism, and why only a return to Marx and Engels’ original revolutionary framework can offer hope to the dispossessed of the world.

The distinctiveness of scientific socialism lies not only in its method, but in its rejection of illusions—both religious and political—that have long stood in the way of true social transformation. Utopian socialism, religious morality, and bourgeois reformism, though appearing to offer alternatives to the brutality of capitalist exploitation, each in their own way conceal the real sources of oppression. Scientific socialism exposes these illusions and grounds the path to liberation not in sentiment, but in material reality.

The utopian socialists of the early nineteenth century—figures such as Charles Fourier, Robert Owen, and Henri de Saint-Simon—believed that reason, good will, and enlightened leadership could reshape society into a harmonious order. Their proposals often included cooperative communities, planned economies, and systems of social welfare. While their intentions were sincere, Marx and Engels saw in them a fundamental misunderstanding of how societies change. Utopians sought to convince the ruling classes to adopt new ideals or hoped to build isolated communities as models for others to follow. What they failed to grasp was that social change does not emerge from moral persuasion or isolated experiments, but from class struggle driven by contradictions within the economic base of society.

In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Engels praised the utopians for their moral clarity, but criticized their lack of historical and material analysis. Their socialism floated above society, an abstract ideal rather than a product of its inner conflicts. Scientific socialism, in contrast, understands that capitalism produces its own gravediggers: the proletariat, who through their exploitation become the class with both the interest and the capacity to overturn the system. Socialism is not a philanthropic gift; it is the necessary outcome of historical development.

Religious morality, too, has long promised justice for the poor and dignity for the humble. But religion, in the analysis of Marx and Engels, functions less as a guide to liberation than as a veil over material conditions. In *The German Ideology*, they argue that dominant ideas in society are the ideas of the ruling class, and religion is among the most enduring of these. It preaches acceptance of suffering, promises rewards in an afterlife, and sanctifies the existing social order as divinely ordained. Marx famously called religion the “opium of the people”—not because he mocked belief, but because he saw it as a palliative that dulled the pain of oppression without curing its cause. In place of spiritual consolation, scientific socialism demands the transformation of real life.

Bourgeois reformism, the preferred approach of liberal democracies, poses yet another obstacle. It promises incremental improvements—higher wages, workplace regulations, social safety nets—but never challenges the ownership of the means of production. The reformist vision leaves the foundations of capitalism untouched, preserving private property, wage labor, and the profit motive. It may soften the edges of exploitation, but it does not abolish it. Scientific socialism recognizes these reforms as temporary concessions made by the ruling class to preserve their dominance, not steps toward real emancipation.

Central to Marxist theory is the concept of alienation, a condition rooted in the capitalist organization of labor. In capitalism, the worker is alienated in multiple dimensions: from the product of their labor, which becomes the property of another; from the labor process itself, which is repetitive and imposed; from their fellow workers, whom they compete against in the market; and from their own human potential, reduced to a commodity sold by the hour. Labor becomes not a means of self-expression or community, but a forced activity necessary for survival. Alienation is not a psychological state, but a structural condition imposed by capitalist relations of production.

At the heart of this alienation is private property—not in the sense of personal belongings, but in the capitalist ownership of land, factories, tools, and resources. As long as a minority controls these means of production, the majority must sell their labor to live, and exploitation is inevitable. Abolishing private property in this specific economic sense is not about theft or redistribution from one elite to another—it is about dismantling the entire system of class division and returning the collective fruits of labor to the workers themselves.

For Marx and Engels, the goal of communism is not state ownership in the abstract, but the socialization of production and the restoration of control to the workers. Only by ending the private appropriation of collectively produced wealth can society eliminate the conditions that give rise to exploitation, alienation, and domination. This demand—to abolish private property as the foundation of class society—is what sets scientific socialism apart from all previous visions of social justice. It is not merely a critique of suffering, but a strategy to end it at its root.

Among the many confusions that have plagued the legacy of Marx and Engels, few have been more persistent or more damaging than the blurred distinction between socialism and communism. In everyday usage—particularly in capitalist countries and Stalinist states alike—the two terms have been used interchangeably, often as ideological weapons rather than

tools of understanding. But in the writings of Marx and Engels, these concepts are part of a historical process, stages in the development of a new society emerging from the ashes of capitalist production.

In their framework, socialism represents the transitional phase immediately following the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist order. In this period, the means of production have been taken out of private hands and placed under collective control, but the remnants of class society still linger. The state, while no longer a tool of the bourgeoisie, still exists—not as a permanent structure of domination, but as a temporary mechanism for organizing the economy and suppressing counterrevolution. The principle that governs this stage is often summarized by the phrase: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.” Distribution is still tied to labor, inequality may persist to a degree, and the social relations of the old system have not been fully abolished.

Communism, in contrast, is the higher phase of this development—a stateless, classless society in which the alienation of labor has been overcome and human cooperation becomes the basis of economic and social life. The guiding principle is no longer tied to merit or contribution, but to need: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.” In this phase, the division of labor has been transformed, the coercive functions of the state have withered away, and production is guided by collective planning rooted in democratic participation. There are no longer exploiters and exploited, no private capital, no standing armies or secret police. Human freedom is no longer a formal right, but the material condition of life.

Marx and Engels were clear: socialism is not an end in itself but a means to communism. It is a phase to be passed through—not institutionalized, not fossilized, not held up as a model of perfection. The tragedy of the 20th century lies partly in the fact that regimes which called themselves socialist halted this transition entirely, replacing the dynamic evolution toward communism with rigid, permanent state power. They declared the revolution complete, even as they created a new ruling elite that exercised total control over labor, speech, and thought. Under such systems, the working class did not govern—it was governed. It did not abolish exploitation—it experienced it in new and often more violent forms.

Marxist theory places the working class—the proletariat—not as an object to be administered, managed, or instructed, but as the subject of history itself. Workers are not passive beneficiaries of revolutionary change; they are its agents. It is only through the conscious, organized activity of the working class that capitalism can be overcome. The state, whether capitalist or allegedly socialist, cannot act in place of the proletariat. It cannot substitute its bureaucracy for the class struggle. When it does, the result is the re-creation of domination under a different banner.

This is why Marx insisted that “the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself.” In capitalism, the working class is alienated not only from production but from political power. In false socialist regimes, that alienation is preserved, cloaked in revolutionary language but enforced by surveillance, imprisonment, and ideological

conformity. In both systems, the people are rendered voiceless—one by the market, the other by the party.

A true Marxist vision does not celebrate the conquest of the state, but prepares for its dissolution. The goal is not to replace capitalist bosses with state managers, but to build institutions of direct democracy, workers control, and collective ownership that make hierarchical rule unnecessary. When Marx described the Paris Commune of 1871, he did not praise it as a dictatorship, but as the first real example of the working class taking power through a flexible, participatory, and accountable form of governance. It was this experience—not the bureaucratic monoliths of the 20th century—that Marx held up as the embryo of true socialist democracy.

To mistake socialism for state centralism, or communism for command economy, is to misunderstand Marx and Engels entirely. Their vision was not of obedience to authority, but of authority dissolving into free association. Their politics was not a replacement of masters, but the abolition of mastery. It is this vision that has been buried—by capital, by Stalinism, and by the propaganda of both. This book seeks to unearth it.

The revolutions that claimed to speak in Marx's name in the twentieth century gave rise not to the emancipation of the working class, but to the rise of bureaucratic states that ruled over workers with an iron fist. Nowhere was this betrayal more complete than under Stalinism—a system that branded itself as communist while abandoning every essential principle of Marxist theory. Instead of dissolving class society, Stalinism reproduced it in a new form, with the party elite replacing the capitalist bourgeoisie as the ruling class, and the vast majority of the population reduced to laborers subject to surveillance, repression, and fear. This is what we must call false socialism: a counterfeit revolution that uses Marxist rhetoric to justify authoritarian rule.

Under Marx and Engels' framework, the state is a tool of class rule, and socialism begins when the working class seizes that tool with the intention of rendering it obsolete. The dictatorship of the proletariat, a term often misinterpreted, was never meant to signify the dictatorship of one man, one party, or a secret police. It referred instead to a temporary condition in which the working class would dismantle the old structures of exploitation and construct democratic institutions in their place—institutions that would gradually make the state itself unnecessary. But under Stalinism, this transitional idea was twisted into a permanent regime. The state did not wither away—it expanded into every aspect of life. Instead of proletarian power, there was a single-party machine, led by a central figure who ruled with unchecked authority.

The working class in Stalinist regimes, far from becoming the ruling class, was stripped of all democratic control. Factories remained hierarchical, orders flowed from bureaucrats rather than workers, and dissent was criminalized as treason. The organs of state violence—the KGB, secret informants, military tribunals—functioned not to defend socialism from reaction, but to defend the ruling party from its own people. In the name of equality, enormous disparities were maintained between those who issued commands and those who

were commanded. In the name of communism, gulags were filled with workers, peasants, and even communists who dared to demand genuine democracy.

This betrayal was not accidental—it was structural. When socialism is built without mass participation, when workers are denied decision-making power, when the state refuses to relinquish its monopoly on truth and violence, the result is not socialism, but a new tyranny. Stalinism is not an extreme version of Marxism—it is its inversion. Where Marx called for the free development of all, Stalinism enforced obedience. Where Engels envisioned the end of political domination, Stalinism deepened it. Where socialism aimed to abolish classes, Stalinism cemented a new ruling class: the bureaucratic elite.

If Stalinism offers false socialism, capitalism offers false freedom. In liberal democracies, citizens are told they are free—free to speak, to vote, to work. But this freedom is formal, not material. The worker is free to sell their labor, but not free from the need to do so. They may choose between employers, but not whether to be employed. They may speak, but their voices are drowned by corporate media. They may vote, but only for parties financed by capital. Their choices are confined within the walls of the market, where profit reigns and labor is reduced to a commodity.

Marx understood this contradiction clearly. In *Capital, Volume I*, he described how workers appear to enter the labor contract freely, but in truth are compelled by economic necessity. This is the illusion of capitalist freedom: that people, while formally equal, operate in a system where property, power, and opportunity are distributed unequally from the outset. A starving person is free to refuse work, but that freedom is a mockery. The system preserves the appearance of choice while denying the substance.

Thus, both systems—capitalism and Stalinism—cloak domination in the language of liberation. One declares the individual sovereign while chaining them to the market; the other declares the workers in power while silencing their voice. In both, the working class is denied true control over its own destiny. In both, the state or the market stands between the workers and the fruits of their labor. Marx's revolution aimed to tear down both these walls—to abolish private capital and dismantle authoritarian command.

To defend Marxism today is to reject not only the violence of capitalism, but the lies of those who have ruled in Marx's name while destroying his vision. False socialism is not a stepping stone to liberation; it is a detour into subjugation. And false freedom, in the capitalist world, remains freedom for the few, built on the labor of the many. The next page will offer the core argument of this book: that only by returning to the revolutionary, democratic, and materialist foundations of socialism can we reclaim a future where the working class is not an object of history—but its author.

The history of the modern world has been shaped by two dominant systems—capitalist democracies in the West and self-proclaimed socialist regimes shaped by Stalinist doctrine in the East and South. Despite their outward opposition, these systems share a fundamental feature: both maintain class domination, both deny the working class real power, and both have betrayed the revolutionary vision of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Though cloaked in

different language and structured around different myths, they operate in practice as mechanisms of control. One is veiled in the rhetoric of markets and freedom; the other in the slogans of revolution and equality. Yet neither delivers the substance of liberation.

This book stands as a rejection of both these paths. It is not written in nostalgia for the failed states that called themselves communist, nor in defense of capitalist democracies that reduce human life to consumer choice and wage labor. Instead, it calls for a return to the core of scientific socialism—a theory grounded in the real, material conditions of human life, and a politics that seeks the abolition of class society altogether. That means not simply redistributing wealth but transforming the very structure of ownership, labor, and governance. It means dismantling both the private power of capital and the centralized coercion of the bureaucratic state.

Marx and Engels did not fight for a society where a new ruling class governs in the name of the people. They fought for a world in which no class rules over another, where production is planned democratically and collectively, and where every individual is free to develop their capacities without coercion, hunger, or fear. They envisioned not a perfected government, but the end of government as an instrument of domination. They believed that once class exploitation was abolished, the state, as a tool of repression, would become unnecessary and would wither away—not grow into a permanent apparatus of control.

The betrayal of that vision has come from two directions. From capitalism, which offers freedom in form but maintains servitude in fact—forcing workers to labor for the enrichment of others, trapping them in economic dependence while promising individual choice. And from Stalinism, which speaks in the name of socialism while crushing dissent, consolidating state power, and preserving class hierarchy in new guises. Each claims victory. Each claims legitimacy. Yet both rest on the exclusion of the working class from real control over their lives and labor.

True socialism must reject this false choice. It must refuse to choose between market tyranny and state tyranny. It must abolish the private ownership of production and the bureaucratic monopolization of power. It must be built from the bottom up—by workers, for workers—through democratic institutions, collective ownership, and the conscious transformation of society by those who live and labor within it. It must not be imposed from above, but grown from below.

This is the thesis of the book: that both capitalism and Stalinism are failed systems in the eyes of Marx and Engels. That neither has liberated the working class. That both have entrenched domination, repackaged exploitation, and disfigured the meaning of socialism. In the chapters to come, we will examine how these betrayals unfolded—in Europe and America, in Asia and Africa—how class power shifted hands but never disappeared, and how the language of liberation was twisted to justify new forms of oppression. Through it all, we will return to the texts and methods of Marx and Engels, not as sacred doctrine, but as the foundation of a struggle still to be won. The revolution they called for has not yet occurred. But their analysis still offers the map. And in that map lies the possibility of a world where the chains of capital and command are broken—not replaced.

Capitalism's Mask: Freedom and Power in Western Democracies

Capitalist democracy, as it appears in the modern world, presents itself as the highest form of political freedom. It promises civil liberties, free elections, legal equality, and individual rights. In the mainstream narrative, it stands in contrast to authoritarian regimes, particularly those labeled as socialist or communist. Yet behind this image of liberty lies a deeper structure of domination—one not imposed by a single party or an armed bureaucracy, but by the market itself, and by the concentration of property in the hands of the capitalist class. In the analysis of Marx and Engels, capitalist democracy is not a system of universal freedom, but a system of class rule disguised by political formalities. Its freedoms are real only for those who own; its laws are equal only in appearance; and its elections, though regular, never touch the foundations of private power.

Marx and Engels understood bourgeois democracy not as the negation of class oppression, but as its legal and ideological form. In *The Communist Manifesto*, they wrote with piercing clarity: “The modern representative state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.” This state—however democratic in its structure—exists to safeguard the economic dominance of the property-owning class. The working class may vote, assemble, and speak, but these rights are tolerated only so long as they do not threaten the ownership of capital or the mechanisms of exploitation. Once those rights challenge the foundation of bourgeois rule, they are quickly curtailed, criminalized, or suppressed under the guise of law and order.

Bourgeois freedom, in this context, is the freedom of the capitalist to buy labor, extract surplus value, and accumulate wealth without interference. It is the freedom of the employer to hire and fire at will, to dictate the terms of work, and to control the lives of others through economic dependency. The worker, legally free, is free in a purely negative sense—free from ownership, free from security, free from the means of survival unless they agree to sell their labor on terms not of their choosing. This is the essential contradiction Marx exposed: that capitalist freedom conceals unfreedom. The wage relation, which appears as a voluntary contract between equals, is in reality a relation of coercion structured by the need to survive in a society where access to land, tools, and resources is monopolized by a minority class.

In the bourgeois democratic order, the separation between political and economic power is itself an illusion. Those who control capital exercise influence not only over production but over the entire political process. Elections are shaped by wealth, media ownership, lobbying, and campaign financing. Legislation reflects the interests of the business class—protecting investments, ensuring low taxes for the rich, and maintaining labor discipline. Even reforms, when granted, are calculated to preserve social stability, not to alter the balance of power. Bourgeois democracy permits political freedom only to the extent that it does not disturb economic domination.

This is the meaning of capitalist democracy: a system in which the forms of liberty are upheld while the substance of power remains in the hands of the ruling class. The working class is

invited to choose its leaders but not its economic destiny. It is told it is free, while its labor produces profits for others. It is taught to believe that inequality is the result of merit, not of historical accumulation and structural exclusion. Marx and Engels understood that in such a society, democracy does not end exploitation—it masks it. The ballot replaces the barricade, and the citizen replaces the class-conscious worker, but the ownership of the means of production remains untouched.

The next pages will explore how this dynamic operates not only in theory but in practice—how capitalist democracies maintain domination through ideology, institutions, and international influence. While they differ from the overt repression of Stalinist regimes, their power lies in their ability to appear neutral, even benevolent, while securing the interests of the few over the needs of the many.

In Western bourgeois democracies, exploitation is not administered by decree or enforced through a visible dictatorship. It is concealed behind institutions that appear to serve the public will: elections, courts, constitutions, and regulated markets. These structures give the illusion of popular control while preserving a system of economic relations in which the working majority remains subordinated to the interests of capital. The system of bourgeois democracy lies in this concealment—in its ability to present a society of wage labor and class division as one of free individuals and fair competition.

Elections are central to this appearance. The citizen is given the right to vote, to choose among competing parties, to participate in what is called democratic governance. But these choices are structured in such a way that they rarely threaten the foundations of capital. Candidates are vetted through systems of party financing, media exposure, and corporate sponsorship. Political discourse is dominated by narratives that marginalize systemic critiques and reward superficial reformism. Even when parties of the left gain power, they operate within a state apparatus that is deeply intertwined with corporate interests, military contracts, and financial institutions. The boundaries of acceptable politics are drawn in advance—not by the people, but by capital.

Legal rights, too, are held up as proof of freedom. Freedom of speech, of press, of assembly, of religion—these are indeed gains won through struggle. Yet in practice, they are shaped by material inequality. The right to speak means little when mass media is owned by a handful of billionaires. The right to assemble can be curtailed through police power, surveillance, or legal harassment. The right to vote loses substance when economic coercion dominates everyday life. Legal equality before the courts cannot conceal the vast disparities in legal outcomes for the rich and the poor. Rights exist, but their realization is limited by class position. As Marx argued, “Between equal rights, force decides”—and in capitalist democracies, that force is always backed by capital.

The market, celebrated as the great equalizer and liberator, is in fact the most powerful instrument of discipline and control. It promises choice, but only within the limits of purchasing power. It rewards initiative, but only when it serves profit. It is upheld as natural, spontaneous, and efficient—yet it is saturated with political decisions, state subsidies, monopolies, and legal protections for private ownership. For the working class, the market is

not a place of empowerment but of dependence. Workers must enter the market not as free agents, but as sellers of their only commodity: labor power. They compete for jobs, endure unemployment, accept wage cuts, and submit to managerial authority—all under the pressure of economic survival.

Marx named this condition for what it is: wage slavery. Though the worker is formally free to sell or withhold their labor, they are bound by necessity to sell it in order to live. Their labor produces commodities that belong to someone else, and the value they create exceeds the wage they receive. This surplus value—the source of profit—is appropriated by the capitalist, accumulated, reinvested, and used to expand the system. Exploitation does not occur in the shadows; it is the very foundation of capitalist production. Yet in bourgeois democracies, it is rendered invisible through legal contracts, workplace norms, and ideological conditioning. The worker is not whipped but managed, not imprisoned but indebted, not chained but conditioned.

Capital accumulation continues behind this mask. The wealth produced by labor is converted into capital, capital is concentrated into fewer hands, and the capitalist class reproduces itself through inheritance, finance, and state policy. Meanwhile, the working class, despite moments of upward mobility, remains dependent on wages and vulnerable to economic crises. The market disciplines them through layoffs, inflation, debt, and precarious employment. These are not accidents of the system—they are the system.

Thus, bourgeois democracies sustain a form of exploitation more stable than that of past aristocracies and more subtle than overt dictatorship. They provide enough participation to claim legitimacy, enough legal rights to appear just, and enough consumption to dampen dissent. But beneath the surface, the same class relations persist: a small group controls production, while the vast majority labors under conditions they do not choose. The next pages will delve deeper into how ideology, media, and education reinforce this system—how the appearance of freedom is maintained while the real conditions of the proletariat remain unchanged.

The capitalist democracies of the West have not confined their domination to national borders. From the late colonial period to the present day, their influence has extended through imperialism, globalization, and the corporate oligarchy that governs the world economy. These are not side-effects of capitalism—they are its expansionist system unfolding on a global scale. In the writings of Marx and later thinkers who extended his analysis, imperialism is not merely a policy of powerful nations, but the inevitable result of capital's drive to overcome limits: limits of national markets, limits of labor costs, and limits of raw material access. As capital expands, it reshapes the world in its image—through war, debt, trade, and technology.

Modern imperialism no longer wears the uniform of colonial rule. It operates through financial institutions, corporate agreements, and military presence masked as humanitarian concern. The United States and the European Union have perfected the method: offering “development,” “investment,” and “partnerships” to weaker nations while imposing policies that entrench dependency and facilitate the extraction of wealth. The International Monetary

Fund and World Bank, both dominated by Western interests, demand austerity, privatization, and deregulation as conditions for loans—forcing states to open their economies to foreign capital, slash public services, and suppress labor protections. These policies are presented as technical necessities, but their effect is clear: to ensure that global labor remains cheap, resources remain accessible, and markets remain open to Western capital.

Contemporary examples are abundant. The U.S. uses its economic and military power to control energy flows, trade routes, and regional politics. Sanctions regimes, military bases, and trade pacts all serve the same purpose: to maintain global conditions favorable to American capital. When nations like Venezuela attempt to nationalize industries or resist foreign exploitation, they are punished through economic isolation, media vilification, and even coup attempts. In Africa, EU policies promote free trade agreements that flood local markets with subsidized European goods, destroying domestic production and locking countries into export-oriented economies dependent on raw materials. These are not mere policy choices—they are structural imperatives of a capitalist system that requires constant expansion and domination to survive.

Globalization, celebrated in liberal discourse as the path to prosperity and unity, is in reality a reconfiguration of imperial power. It allows capital to move freely across borders, while restricting the movement of labor. Corporations relocate production to the lowest-wage regions, exploit weak environmental laws, and use supply chains to divide workers across nations, weakening their capacity to organize. The result is a global labor force fragmented and insecure, while transnational corporations accumulate unprecedented wealth and influence. These corporations function as the ruling class of the global order. They shape trade policy, influence legislation, and coordinate with governments to secure favorable conditions. In many cases, their revenues exceed the GDPs of the countries in which they operate.

The corporate oligarchy does not merely profit from globalization—it designs it. Major tech, finance, and resource extraction firms wield de facto state power, not through formal governance but through their control over capital flows, innovation, and strategic infrastructure. They operate above accountability, protected by private arbitration courts, tax havens, and lobbying networks that ensure favorable regulations. These entities are the true rulers in bourgeois democracies—not elected officials, but the owners and managers of global capital. Political power is exercised not through law alone, but through investment decisions, campaign contributions, and media control.

Marx understood that capital seeks not merely profit but dominion. Its system compels it to subordinate all other values—democracy, sovereignty, environment—to the imperative of accumulation. The modern imperial system does not conquer with flags and armies alone; it conquers with contracts, sanctions, and debt. It imposes the discipline of the market on every society it touches, ensuring that labor remains exploitable and surplus value continues to flow upward.

Thus, capitalist democracies, far from being neutral arbiters of rights and prosperity, function as centers of a global class system. Their institutions manage not only internal exploitation

but the maintenance of a world order in which the global South remains a reservoir of cheap labor and raw material, and the global North remains the center of financial command. The next pages will examine how ideology, culture, and education serve to legitimize this arrangement—how the mythology of Western democracy conceals its imperial character, and how capitalist societies reproduce their domination across generations and continents.

Bourgeois democracy does not rely on open repression to maintain its rule—not primarily. Instead, it governs through ideas. The dominance of the capitalist class is reinforced not just through law and markets, but through culture, belief, and perception. It is this quiet mechanism of control that allows capitalist societies to function without constant force. The public comes to accept its conditions as natural, inevitable, even desirable. This is what Marx and Engels meant in *The German Ideology* when they wrote that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.” In capitalist society, the ruling class not only owns the factories and banks—it also owns the narratives, the images, and the frameworks through which people interpret the world around them.

The media plays a central role in shaping these ruling ideas. In capitalist democracies, the press is often portrayed as free and independent, yet it operates under the ownership and direction of capital. A small number of corporations control the bulk of television networks, newspapers, and digital platforms. Their interests are aligned with those of their shareholders and advertisers, and their coverage reflects this alignment. Structural critiques of capitalism are excluded or marginalized. Political discourse is limited to safe boundaries, where dissent is permitted only so long as it does not question private property, wage labor, or the legitimacy of the market. When workers strike, they are portrayed as selfish; when markets crash, blame is assigned to individuals, never the system.

News cycles are saturated with spectacle, scandal, and distraction. Political figures become brands, elections become theater, and economic suffering is explained as personal failure rather than systemic design. Even critiques of inequality are filtered through narratives that depoliticize poverty—treating it as a humanitarian issue rather than a consequence of exploitation. In this way, media does not only inform—it conditions. It reproduces capitalist values, glorifies consumerism, and trains individuals to see their role not as collective agents but as passive observers and isolated consumers.

Education, too, serves this function. While often framed as a path to empowerment, the modern education system in capitalist democracies prepares individuals not for critical thought but for economic obedience. From early schooling to university, students are taught to internalize discipline, respect authority, and compete with one another. Curricula emphasize individual achievement, meritocracy, and the myth of upward mobility. History is sanitized; revolutions are reduced to footnotes; the labor movement is ignored or demonized. Economic theory is presented through neoclassical models that conceal class struggle and deny the existence of exploitation. Most students graduate without encountering the ideas of Marx, Engels, or any analysis that questions the foundations of the system they are entering.

Higher education, particularly in economics and business, becomes a training ground for future managers of capital. Students are taught how to maximize profit, manage labor, and

navigate financial markets—not how to dismantle the structures of inequality those practices uphold. Critical disciplines are defunded, and scholarship that challenges dominant ideologies is sidelined. Education becomes not a liberating force, but an ideological filter, shaping minds to reproduce the status quo.

Ideology, in this context, is not simply a set of opinions—it is the lens through which people understand reality. In capitalist democracies, ideology naturalizes the existing order. It teaches that wealth is earned, that markets are neutral, that success is a matter of effort. It obscures the structural nature of poverty, unemployment, and exploitation. People come to believe that their suffering is personal, their competition is fair, and their rulers are chosen. As Marx and Engels made clear, the ruling class must present its domination not as domination, but as common sense, as morality, as freedom. This is the system of capitalist ideology: its ability to mask coercion as consent.

This ideological control is reinforced by popular culture, advertising, and entertainment. Every film, every commercial, every slogan subtly teaches that fulfillment lies in consumption, that identity is a product to be curated, that security is found not in solidarity but in possession. Capitalism invades the most intimate spaces—relationships, desires, aspirations—and molds them in its image. People learn not only to accept the world as it is, but to desire it.

In such a world, revolutionary thought becomes difficult to imagine. Not because it is flawed, but because it is invisible. The horizon of possibility is narrowed by institutions that reward conformity and punish dissent. The domination of capital is not felt as tyranny but as normal life. The next page will conclude the chapter by exposing how capitalist democracies maintain their global order through this combination of material force and ideological submission—and how these systems, far from being democratic in any meaningful sense, operate to secure the continued rule of a property-owning minority at the expense of the working majority.

The structure of capitalist democracies, for all their outward commitments to liberty, justice, and equality, is built upon foundations that Marx and Engels recognized as inherently oppressive. Behind the language of rights and the appearance of popular sovereignty lies a system organized around the preservation of private property, the maintenance of class hierarchy, and the disempowerment of the very class whose labor sustains the entire economy—the proletariat. The state, far from being a neutral institution, functions to manage and protect these class divisions. It is the political expression of bourgeois economic dominance, clothed in democratic form to legitimize what is, at its core, a system of organized inequality.

Marx did not view the state as a mediator among equal citizens, but as a weapon wielded by the ruling class to maintain its control. In capitalist society, this ruling class is the bourgeoisie, whose wealth is derived from the exploitation of labor and whose continued dominance depends on the security of private ownership over the means of production. The state defends this ownership through laws, police, courts, and military force. It taxes labor more than capital, suppresses strikes more readily than tax fraud, and subsidizes industries far

more generously than it supports social welfare. It is responsive not to the majority who work, but to the minority who own.

Capitalist democracies claim to be societies of free individuals. But Marx showed that real freedom is impossible in a system where the majority are compelled to sell their labor under conditions they do not control. The worker is free only to accept exploitation or to face unemployment. They are permitted to choose among masters, but not to abolish mastery itself. This is not freedom in the Marxist sense—it is a form of compulsion hidden beneath legal contracts and market norms. The separation between the worker and the means of production is preserved at all costs, and any attempt to challenge that separation is met with the full force of law and ideology.

The idea of proletarian self-emancipation, so central to Marx and Engels, is entirely absent from the political culture of capitalist states. The working class is not treated as the subject of history, capable of reshaping society on its own terms, but as a population to be managed, pacified, and instructed. When workers organize, their movements are fragmented. When they speak, their voices are filtered through institutions designed to moderate their demands. When they vote, their choices are confined within a political spectrum that excludes the abolition of capitalist property relations. Their struggle is tolerated only when it can be absorbed without transforming the system.

This is why capitalist democracy, while distinct from open dictatorship, still stands in contradiction to the principles of socialism. It upholds private property not as a social relationship to be changed, but as a sacred right. It treats the capitalist not as a member of an exploitative class, but as a job creator and benefactor. It reduces politics to a contest of personalities and parties, excluding the fundamental question of who owns and controls the material foundations of life.

For Marx and Engels, the goal was never to reform capitalism into a more humane version of itself. It was to abolish it altogether. They called for a society in which the workers collectively control production, in which class distinctions are dissolved, and in which the state itself ceases to exist as an instrument of domination. Such a society cannot emerge from within the confines of bourgeois democracy. It must be built by the working class through its own conscious organization and struggle—through a revolution that ends class society, not merely rebrands it.

Capitalist democracies preserve the conditions of exploitation, even as they offer formal rights. They secure the rule of capital through consent as much as through coercion. And in doing so, they betray the very idea of freedom they claim to uphold. The next chapter will examine the opposite pole in the global system: the so-called socialist states built in the Stalinist model. There we will find a different mask, worn not by capital, but by the party—yet serving the same purpose: the suppression of proletarian power, the preservation of hierarchy, and the prevention of genuine socialism.

Stalinism Unmasked: The Perverted Legacy of Revolution

If capitalist democracies disguise class domination beneath the mask of freedom, Stalinist regimes conceal it beneath the banner of socialism. Yet the substance of oppression remains. Stalinism presents itself as the heir of Marx and Engels, as the fulfillment of proletarian revolution, yet in reality it stands in open contradiction to everything the founders of scientific socialism envisioned. It replaced capitalist exploitation not with its abolition, but with its mutation. A new ruling class emerged—not of capitalists, but of bureaucrats and party functionaries. The means of production, though no longer privately owned, remained alien to the workers who created their wealth. Power did not pass to the proletariat—it was monopolized by a centralized state apparatus that ruled in their name while denying them voice, autonomy, and dignity.

Stalinism must be understood not merely as the personal reign of Joseph Stalin, but as a distinct system—a mode of governance and economy built upon the ruins of revolutionary hope. It is a system that claimed Marxist legitimacy while subverting Marxist principle. At its core was a profound reversal: instead of the withering away of the state, Stalinism constructed an all-powerful state that penetrated every level of life. Instead of class abolition, it cemented a new class structure: a party-state elite that lived apart from and above the masses. Instead of democratic control of production, it imposed command from above. Instead of the self-emancipation of the working class, it imposed subordination through fear, surveillance, and terror.

The defining traits of Stalinist systems became unmistakable. Foremost among them was the one-party state. All political opposition was eliminated. The Communist Party claimed to represent the working class, yet allowed no independent expression of that class. Soviets and workers' councils, originally meant to be instruments of popular power, were gutted of content and reduced to ceremonial bodies under party command. Elections became meaningless rituals, and mass organizations were transformed into arms of the state. This was not proletarian democracy—it was enforced conformity.

Alongside the monopoly on political life came the machinery of repression. The Stalinist state relied on an immense security apparatus: secret police, informants, labor camps, censorship, and purges. Loyalty to the party was absolute, and dissent—even within the ranks of committed communists—was criminalized. The purges of the 1930s in the Soviet Union saw not only perceived enemies of the state executed or imprisoned, but also veterans of the October Revolution, Marxist theorists, trade unionists, and ordinary workers who voiced criticism. Terror became a tool not to defend socialism, but to suppress it. A regime that claimed to act on behalf of the proletariat crushed that very class with a precision that rivaled any capitalist repression.

Another hallmark of Stalinism was the cult of personality. Marx and Engels rejected all savior figures, insisting that revolution must be the conscious act of the masses, not the gift of a leader. But under Stalin, leadership became deified. His image was omnipresent—on walls,

in schools, in literature, in history itself. Critical thought was replaced with sycophancy. The party line became absolute truth, and deviation from it was not a matter of debate but a punishable offense. This personalism violated the very heart of Marxist materialism, replacing historical analysis with myth, and class struggle with obedience to authority.

Beneath the ideological slogans, Stalinism reproduced many of the core structures of capitalist domination. The workplace remained authoritarian. Labor was regimented, driven by quotas, and enforced through punishment. Production was oriented not around human need, but around state plans devised without worker input. Social mobility was tied not to class consciousness, but to party loyalty. A small stratum of officials enjoyed privileges, housing, travel, and influence unimaginable to the workers they governed. The state had become the new owner, and the party the new master.

What emerged, therefore, was a system that preserved exploitation under the guise of socialism. It used Marxist language to justify anti-Marxist realities. It claimed the legacy of revolution while extinguishing its core promise: that the working class would become the ruling class, and then abolish class itself. The following pages will examine how Stalinism spread across the globe—in China, North Korea, Cuba, and parts of Africa and Asia—adopting the same methods, preserving the same ruling structures, and betraying the same principles. Through this analysis, the book will further distinguish between socialism as Marx and Engels defined it, and the counter-revolution that took their name but destroyed their vision.

At the heart of Marx and Engels' revolutionary vision was the idea that the state, as a structure of coercion born from class antagonism, would become obsolete once class society was abolished. In its place, a new social organization would arise—one without domination, without standing armies, without a permanent bureaucracy ruling from above. The state was not to be perfected, but dissolved. Yet Stalinism did the opposite. It not only preserved the state, it expanded it into a massive instrument of surveillance, discipline, and command. Where Marx called for the working class to take control of its own destiny, Stalinism established a militarized bureaucracy that ruled over the working class as a separate and unaccountable power.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the early Bolshevik state entered a period of crisis—civil war, foreign invasions, famine, and economic collapse. In those desperate years, extraordinary measures were taken, including the centralization of power and the suppression of opposition. These measures, originally described as temporary, hardened into permanent structures. By the time Stalin rose to absolute leadership in the mid-1920s, the revolutionary institutions—soviets, party debates, and workers' control—had been hollowed out. In their place stood a powerful state apparatus that no longer served as a transitional tool of the working class but had become an autonomous machine of rule.

The Stalinist state expanded its repressive capacity to a scale unprecedented in socialist history. It built vast secret police networks, maintained forced labor camps across the country, and developed a culture of fear that penetrated every workplace, school, and neighborhood. Surveillance was not limited to enemies of the state; it was directed inward,

against workers, peasants, intellectuals, and even lifelong party members. The very idea of independent workers' power was treated as subversion. Criticism was equated with treason. Those who raised their voices in defense of Marxist principles were purged, imprisoned, or executed.

Rather than withering away, the state under Stalin grew into a military-bureaucratic Leviathan. It controlled all economic planning, production, education, the arts, and communication. Command flowed from the top downward, not from the base upward. The role of the worker was reduced to that of executor, not planner—laboring to fulfill centrally determined quotas under constant pressure and scrutiny. The managers and party officials who oversaw production formed a privileged caste, insulated from the hardships and dangers of proletarian life. This was not socialism; it was a re-imposition of hierarchical rule by a new class of administrators.

Militarization became the dominant system of the Stalinist system. Industry was organized as if for war, even in peacetime. Economic plans were driven not by the measured development of human needs, but by the accumulation of heavy industry, armaments, and military prestige. Workers were subjected to regimentation, strict discipline, and ideological policing. Deviation from orders was treated not as error but as sabotage. In this climate, the individual disappeared, and the collective did not rise in its place—only the centralized party-state, which claimed to embody the collective while acting without its consent.

The state that was meant to serve the people now ruled them. It stood above society as a force of coercion, extracting labor, demanding obedience, and defining all truth through its ideology. It did not educate the working class into political maturity; it infantilized them, reducing them to instruments of a plan they did not design and could not challenge. The very mechanisms that were supposed to enable socialist transformation—state ownership, central planning, and the leadership of the Communist Party—became ends in themselves, disconnected from the democratic control that alone could make them emancipatory.

This betrayal was not an unfortunate excess. It was the way of a system that had severed itself from the masses and entrenched a new ruling order. What remained of Marxism was only its language—emptied of its meaning, stripped of its purpose. The following pages will examine how this model spread to other nations, adapted to local contexts, but always reproducing the same structure: a one-party state, a privileged bureaucracy, and a disempowered working class. Each case, whether in Asia, Latin America, or Africa, offers another confirmation of Stalinism's core nature: not a continuation of socialism, but a counter-revolution carried out in its name.

Marxism, from its inception, was international in both spirit and strategy. Marx and Engels declared in *The Communist Manifesto* that “the working men have no country,” and ended with the call: “Workers of the world, unite!” The proletarian revolution, in their view, was never to be a national project isolated within borders but a global movement, born from shared class interests and sustained through solidarity across nations. Stalinism, however, marked a stark departure from this core tenet. It replaced internationalism with nationalism,

solidarity with suspicion, and collective struggle with the narrow system of state survival. In doing so, it further severed itself from the Marxist tradition it claimed to uphold.

After the failure of socialist uprisings in Germany, Hungary, and elsewhere in the aftermath of World War I, the Bolshevik leadership found itself increasingly isolated. But instead of maintaining the commitment to international revolution and supporting grassroots movements abroad, the Stalinist doctrine adopted what it called “socialism in one country.” This was a radical break with Marxist theory, which held that socialism could not be fully achieved within the limits of a single nation-state. Capitalism was a global system, and its overthrow, Marx believed, would require a global process. Yet Stalin’s position treated the Soviet state not as a base for advancing world revolution, but as a fortress to be defended—even if it meant compromising socialist movements elsewhere.

This rejection of internationalism was not simply theoretical—it had real and disastrous consequences. Communist parties around the world were subordinated to the foreign policy needs of the Soviet Union. Revolutionary movements were often instructed to moderate their demands, forge alliances with bourgeois nationalists, or dissolve themselves entirely to serve Moscow’s geopolitical calculations. The Spanish Revolution was crushed in part by Stalinist forces working to suppress anarchist and Trotskyist militias. In China, Vietnam, and beyond, local struggles were channeled into authoritarian molds patterned after Stalin’s own regime, ensuring that independent socialist development would be impossible. What emerged was a network of satellite states and ideologically controlled parties, not an international workers’ movement.

At the same time, within the Stalinist states themselves, workers’ democracy—the very condition of genuine socialism—was abandoned. The councils, or *soviets*, that had emerged in revolutionary Russia as organs of direct worker power were emptied of authority. Workplace democracy was non-existent; factory committees were replaced by state-appointed managers, and union leaders were folded into the party hierarchy. Elections were staged with a single candidate, mass meetings became performances of loyalty, and criticism of policy, even from dedicated socialists, was treated as sabotage. Dissent was not debated—it was purged.

Marx envisioned socialism as a form of political life in which the working class not only held state power but began to dismantle the state as an oppressive force. The very idea of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” was not, as misinterpreted by later regimes, a justification for permanent autocracy. It referred to a temporary phase of working-class control aimed at suppressing the remnants of bourgeois power while preparing the ground for the abolition of all class domination. This meant, ultimately, the withering away of the state—not its expansion into a totalizing bureaucracy.

Stalinism reversed this trajectory entirely. The state did not begin to fade—it grew stronger, more repressive, and more alienated from the people. Rather than disappearing as class divisions disappeared, the state under Stalinism created and preserved new class distinctions between the rulers and the ruled. Its officials claimed to act in the name of the workers, yet retained exclusive control over the means of production, the direction of policy, and the

definition of ideology. In short, the state ceased to be a transitional vehicle and became a permanent structure of domination.

This betrayal of Marx's vision has left lasting scars. It has allowed the enemies of socialism to equate Marxism with tyranny, and to present Stalinism's crimes as the inevitable outcome of revolutionary politics. But what Stalinism represents is not the failure of Marxism, but its negation. By rejecting internationalism, suppressing workers' democracy, and entrenching state power, Stalinism severed itself from the revolutionary project and established a new form of class society. The next pages will explore how this model was exported globally—shaping the political realities of countries from China and North Korea to Ethiopia, Angola, and Cuba—and how, despite their claims to Marxist heritage, these regimes deepened the very forms of domination that Marx and Engels sought to abolish.

The Stalinist system, once entrenched in the Soviet Union, did not remain a national phenomenon. It became a template exported across the globe—adopted by regimes that claimed to carry the banner of Marxism while enacting a form of authoritarianism deeply hostile to the fundamental principles of socialist democracy. From the USSR to China, North Korea, and Cambodia, a consistent pattern emerged: mass repression, political purges, the elimination of dissent, and the destruction of independent working-class power. In each case, the working class was not liberated, but subordinated to a centralized state structure that claimed to act in its name.

The Soviet Union under Stalin represents the first and most far-reaching example of this descent. By the late 1920s and into the 1930s, the USSR witnessed the consolidation of a repressive one-party state that viewed all independent political organization—especially within the working class—as a threat. The Great Purges (1936–1938) marked a systematic campaign of terror that targeted not only supposed counterrevolutionaries and foreign agents, but also committed Marxists, old Bolsheviks, union activists, and ordinary workers who questioned the regime's direction. Millions were executed, imprisoned in gulags, or sent into exile. The state security apparatus, the NKVD, operated with unchecked authority. Denunciations, forced confessions, and show trials created an atmosphere in which silence became the only survival strategy. All remnants of democratic participation were erased. Soviets became rubber-stamp institutions, and workers' councils, where they still existed, were tightly monitored and purged of critical voices.

In China, the same Stalinist system took root after the Communist Party's victory in 1949. The revolution, though rooted in peasant mobilization, soon turned into a top-down restructuring of society led by the party bureaucracy under Mao Zedong. During the Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957), hundreds of thousands of intellectuals, party members, and workers who had dared to express criticism were labeled enemies of the revolution. They were dismissed from their jobs, sent to labor camps, or executed. The Great Leap Forward (1958–1962), an industrial and agricultural campaign driven by utopian production targets and party command, resulted in catastrophic famine, with tens of millions dead. Yet even in the face of mass starvation, criticism of the plan was met with repression. The Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) further deepened state control and terror. Red Guards, often made

up of indoctrinated youth, attacked teachers, workers, and party officials deemed “bourgeois” or insufficiently loyal. Independent thought was violently crushed, and working-class initiative was replaced with enforced ideological purity.

North Korea presents perhaps the most complete expression of Stalinist control, transformed into a hereditary dictatorship under the Kim dynasty. After the division of Korea and the rise of Kim Il-sung, the state built a closed system of total surveillance, ideological indoctrination, and absolute rule. The cult of personality surrounding the leadership reached theological dimensions. Any deviation from the party line—real or imagined—was met with disappearance into the gulag system known as *kwanliso*, political prison camps where torture, starvation, and execution were common. The entire society became militarized, with labor organized under paramilitary discipline. Trade unions were hollow shells controlled by the state. No independent working-class organizations were permitted; all mass participation was choreographed from above. Loyalty was rewarded; dissent, even passive, was fatal.

In Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge (1975–1979), Stalinist methods merged with a brutal agrarian ideology that aimed to erase all traces of modern society. Led by Pol Pot, the regime declared Year Zero and began a violent campaign to “purify” the country. Cities were emptied, intellectuals were murdered, and all former political, economic, and cultural structures were destroyed. Any association with the previous order, including literacy, was grounds for execution. Labor was organized into rural communes under extreme conditions. The Khmer Rouge claimed to speak for the peasantry, but in practice imposed total state domination over every aspect of life. An estimated two million people died from execution, starvation, and forced labor within just four years. There was no trace of workers’ democracy—only terror masked as revolution.

In all these examples, we see a common betrayal. The working class, which Marx and Engels held as the engine of emancipation, was stripped of agency and reduced to a silent workforce serving the needs of a party elite. Institutions meant to empower workers—councils, unions, communes—were co-opted or destroyed. Dissent was crushed, not debated. The masses were not subjects of revolution but objects of command. Socialism was invoked not as a program of liberation, but as a justification for absolute control.

The next and final page of this chapter will draw these threads together, contrasting these regimes with the principles of genuine Marxist socialism and explaining how Stalinism served not the working class, but a new class of rulers—preserving hierarchy, domination, and the state itself.

The regimes that followed the Stalinist path—whether in Moscow, Beijing, Pyongyang, or Phnom Penh—did not represent a continuation of Marxist theory but its fundamental distortion. They retained Marxist vocabulary, employed red flags and slogans, and claimed to be building socialism, but in practice, they replaced working-class self-emancipation with top-down authority, democratic participation with forced obedience, and revolutionary transformation with state-enforced conformity. These regimes did not abolish class rule; they merely replaced one ruling class with another.

In each case, the state was elevated above society rather than subordinated to it. What Marx described as a transitional tool—the “dictatorship of the proletariat”—was transformed into a permanent and absolute regime of repression. The working class was stripped of political control, denied access to independent organization, and conscripted into serving the goals of a centralized bureaucracy. Far from withering away, the state under Stalinism became larger, more intrusive, and more brutal than many of the regimes it claimed to replace.

In Marx’s vision, socialism was to be the conscious act of the majority—the working class organizing itself, seizing the means of production, and reshaping society through democratic cooperation. The state was not to become an all-knowing master but a temporary coordinator of the transition toward a classless society. Once the conditions of exploitation were removed and social contradictions resolved, the state, having no more class antagonisms to manage, would dissolve. This was not utopian idealism; it was the logical outcome of a society no longer divided between rulers and ruled.

Stalinism abandoned this trajectory. It clung to the state as a source of privilege, defended its apparatus with terror, and elevated its leadership above critique. The new ruling class—the party-state elite—preserved its power not by abolishing class distinctions, but by constructing new ones under the veil of revolutionary rhetoric. The masses were celebrated in speeches, but silenced in practice. Socialism was no longer about freedom from exploitation; it became synonymous with loyalty to the state, obedience to the party, and the suppression of opposition.

Marx once wrote that the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself. Stalinism made that act impossible. It removed the subject of history and replaced it with a bureaucratic machine. It claimed victory while betraying the very people it claimed to liberate. Its legacy is not one of socialism, but of reaction clothed in revolutionary language.

The next chapter will trace how this Stalinist model extended its reach into Africa, where postcolonial regimes adopted Marxist-Leninist slogans while replicating the same structures of centralized authority, one-party rule, and elite dominance. We will examine how these systems, despite national particularities, reproduced the same betrayal of socialism’s essence: the continued subordination of the working majority to a self-preserving minority—whether under the guise of revolution or the rhetoric of development.

Africa’s Red Illusion: From Socialist Pledges to Authoritarian Persistence

In the mid-20th century, as colonial empires crumbled across Africa, a new generation of political leaders stepped forward to shape the future of their liberated nations. Many of these leaders, emerging from anti-colonial struggle and armed resistance, embraced the language of socialism—promising economic justice, national sovereignty, and collective development. Marxist-Leninist parties became the vehicles of post-independence governance in several

African countries, inspired not only by Soviet support but also by a genuine desire to break with colonial exploitation and imperial dependency. Yet the socialism that was constructed in much of post-colonial Africa bore more resemblance to the Stalinist command model than to the democratic socialism envisioned by Marx and Engels. Revolutionary rhetoric gave way to one-party rule, state repression, and elite dominance, as the promises of popular emancipation were swallowed by authoritarian consolidation.

Ethiopia, under the Derg military junta from 1974 to 1991, presents one of the starkest examples of this trajectory. Following the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie, the Derg declared a Marxist revolution, nationalized land, aligned with the Soviet Union, and launched sweeping campaigns of centralization and militarization. Yet the regime's socialism consisted not of worker empowerment, but of state-directed command and repression. The Red Terror campaign of the late 1970s witnessed the arrest, torture, and execution of tens of thousands of suspected dissidents. Peasant communities were forcefully resettled. Land reform, though radical in scope, was imposed from above without democratic control. The working class and rural poor were not liberated; they were subjected to the dictates of a military-bureaucratic elite that ruled in the name of socialism but mimicked the methods of Stalinist coercion.

In Angola, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) declared itself a Marxist-Leninist party after independence in 1975. Backed by Cuban troops and Soviet aid, the MPLA government established a single-party state, nationalized industries, and suppressed rival factions. A long civil war followed, and internal dissent was met with surveillance, imprisonment, and execution. The ruling elite, concentrated in the party and military, enriched itself through control of oil revenues while the general population remained impoverished. Workers and peasants were never given control over production; instead, the state replaced colonial administration with its own hierarchy, and the promised revolution was reduced to a centralized system of patronage and political loyalty.

Mozambique followed a similar course. After gaining independence from Portugal in 1975, the FRELIMO party declared a Marxist-Leninist orientation, nationalized property, and launched programs for health, education, and agrarian reform. Yet the new order was structured without grassroots participation. The party's internal democracy dissolved, opposition was banned, and dissenters were labeled reactionaries. In the name of socialist reconstruction, FRELIMO imposed collective villages and state farms with little input from those affected. The civil war that engulfed the country exposed the fragility of the top-down model. By the late 1980s, economic collapse and internal crisis forced the abandonment of Marxist language, but the governing structures of centralized rule remained intact.

In Benin, the 1974 revolution led by Colonel Mathieu Kérékou also adopted Marxism-Leninism as the official state ideology. A single-party system was created under the Parti de la Révolution Populaire du Bénin. Nationalization of industry, educational reform, and ideological training became state priorities. However, the system quickly ossified into authoritarian control. The revolutionary party became the gatekeeper of all public life, and citizens were required to demonstrate ideological conformity. Economic mismanagement and repression undermined public confidence. By 1989, Kérékou himself renounced Marxism,

but the political culture of centralized authority, elite dominance, and minimal democratic participation outlived the ideology it once invoked.

Congo-Brazzaville's Parti Congolais du Travail declared a Marxist-Leninist republic in 1969 and aligned closely with Moscow and East Germany. It formed a people's militia, nationalized industry, and centralized the state apparatus. But true proletarian participation never materialized. Power was tightly held by the party's inner circle, and repression of opposition was routine. The governing elite adopted the structure of Stalinist rule, merging state and party into a single commanding authority. Though multiparty reform came in the 1990s, the same ruling networks remained in place, preserving the old habits under new names.

Somalia under Siad Barre also adopted the language of socialism after the 1969 coup. His regime proclaimed a scientific socialist path, allied with the Soviet Union, and nationalized key sectors. Yet Somali socialism was built on clan manipulation, state propaganda, and an intelligence apparatus modeled on Soviet methods. Political prisons, censorship, and purges defined the era. The working class had no organized voice, and the regime's fall in 1991 revealed a country devastated by dictatorship and divided by years of enforced loyalty and suppressed dissent.

In Guinea, under the long rule of Sékou Touré from 1958 to 1984, socialism was proclaimed in defiance of French colonial power. Touré's state outlawed opposition, established labor camps, and demanded strict ideological conformity. Though not strictly Marxist-Leninist in theory, Guinea followed Stalinist practice in reality. Trade unions became tools of state control, and independent intellectual life was suffocated. Thousands were imprisoned or executed, and the dream of national liberation gave way to a paranoid autocracy draped in revolutionary symbolism.

Across these cases, one sees a recurring pattern: socialist language serving as a mask for elite consolidation, bureaucratic control replacing mass participation, and the state becoming an instrument not of liberation but of domination. The next pages will explore how, even after the formal abandonment of Marxism-Leninism in the 1990s, the ruling structures and authoritarian habits born from this period continue to shape African politics today—proving that ideology can be discarded while power remains untouched.

While postcolonial African leaders evoked Marxist-Leninist ideals to legitimize their revolutions, the political systems they constructed bore a far closer resemblance to Stalinist governance than to the socialism Marx and Engels envisioned. The defining features of these regimes—single-party rule, omnipresent security forces, secret police networks, political purges, and state-controlled ideology—were not accidental deviations. They were consciously modeled on the authoritarian framework established under Stalin in the Soviet Union, where power was centralized in the hands of a party elite, and any form of independent class expression was viewed as a threat to the state.

In country after country, the single party became the exclusive channel of political life. From the MPLA in Angola to FRELIMO in Mozambique, from the Derg in Ethiopia to the Parti de

la Révolution Populaire in Benin, the ruling party absorbed all institutions of governance. Parliaments existed, but only as extensions of party authority. Mass organizations, trade unions, and youth or women's groups were folded into state structures, stripped of autonomy, and repurposed to deliver ideological conformity rather than represent the interests of their members. The party was declared the vanguard of the people, yet in practice it served as the instrument of a new ruling caste.

Security forces were expanded into instruments of internal control, modeled on the Soviet KGB or East Germany's Stasi. In Ethiopia, the Derg created a vast surveillance state, with informants embedded in neighborhoods, universities, and workplaces. The Red Terror campaign of 1977–1978, carried out under the slogan of defending the revolution, led to thousands of extrajudicial killings and widespread imprisonment. In Somalia, Siad Barre's regime used the National Security Service to track dissenters and eliminate political rivals. The language of revolutionary vigilance masked a campaign of terror designed to break the spirit of independent political life.

Secret police organizations became permanent features of these regimes. Guinea's Camp Boiro became infamous for torture, disappearances, and the extermination of perceived "enemies of the revolution." Political prisoners languished in appalling conditions across the continent, not for defending capitalism, but often for advocating for deeper democracy, worker control, or critiques of ruling elites' corruption. Marxist principles were invoked not to protect the working class but to justify its silencing. To criticize the party was to commit counterrevolution; to suggest alternatives was to risk execution or exile.

Political repression went hand in hand with ideological indoctrination. From primary schools to state-run media, every institution was tasked with producing a loyal and obedient citizenry. History was rewritten to glorify the ruling party's past. Leaders were transformed into father-figures or saviors of the nation, echoing the cult of personality that surrounded Stalin. Public displays of loyalty—parades, rallies, posters, and songs—replaced genuine political participation. Thought was policed not only by force, but by ritual. Marxist-Leninist language was emptied of content and reduced to slogans, detached from any practice of collective empowerment.

Education systems were restructured around ideological training. In Mozambique, "revolutionary schools" taught the youth that the party was the embodiment of the people's will, and that dissent was treasonous. In Angola, citizens were expected to demonstrate political correctness through public declarations of loyalty to the MPLA. Across many of these regimes, critical thought was sacrificed for ideological obedience. Teachers, students, journalists, and even party members lived under constant suspicion.

The result was a political order where socialism became synonymous not with worker control, but with state control. The public sphere was drained of autonomy. Institutions that could have been sites of democratic deliberation—unions, councils, cooperatives—were transformed into tools of state discipline. The dream of postcolonial liberation was captured by an elite that secured its position not by dissolving hierarchy, but by reproducing it in new, ideologically decorated forms.

In these regimes, the betrayal of Marxist principles mirrored the betrayal committed under Stalin. The central question—who holds power, and in whose name—is answered not by democratic engagement, but by party fiat. The class that was meant to be the subject of history became the object of administration. The masses, in whose name revolutions were waged, were politically immobilized and ideologically managed. As we will see in the following pages, even after the official abandonment of Marxism-Leninism in the 1990s, these structures endured—stripped of their red flags but preserving their essential function: to keep the working class from ruling, and to secure the dominance of the few over the many.

The transformation of postcolonial African regimes into authoritarian states draped in Marxist-Leninist language was not a purely domestic phenomenon. From the 1960s onward, the influence of external socialist powers—most notably the Soviet Union and Cuba—played a decisive role in shaping the structures, strategies, and ideologies of these governments. While Moscow and Havana provided critical support—military training, economic aid, and diplomatic backing—they also transmitted the political system of Stalinist governance. The result was not the flowering of democratic socialism in Africa, but the replication of bureaucratic authoritarianism, reinforced by dependency on foreign power and an overreliance on militarization as a tool of rule.

The Soviet Union emerged as a strategic patron to many African liberation movements in the Cold War context, not purely out of ideological solidarity, but as part of its geopolitical struggle against Western imperialism. Angola's MPLA, Ethiopia's Derg, Mozambique's FRELIMO, and Benin's revolutionary regime all received Soviet backing in the form of arms, advisors, and logistical support. Moscow's assistance often came with training in political indoctrination, security organization, and state planning—following the USSR's own centralized, top-down model. African revolutionaries were educated in Soviet military academies and political schools, absorbing not only technical skills but also a vision of socialism tied tightly to party control and bureaucratic command.

Cuba, though smaller in scale, played a parallel and at times more deeply involved role, particularly in Angola and Ethiopia. Cuban troops were instrumental in defending the MPLA government during the Angolan civil war, and advisors were embedded in key areas of state administration. Fidel Castro spoke often of international solidarity and proletarian internationalism, yet the form that Cuban support took often mirrored the Soviet approach: reinforcing centralized party leadership, supporting one-party dominance, and strengthening the state's coercive machinery. Cuban doctors, teachers, and soldiers brought real benefits to health and education systems, but the political model they reinforced remained one of strict ideological conformity.

The military aspect of this influence cannot be overstated. In Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique, state power was built around militarized hierarchies. Political leadership was indistinguishable from military command. Armed struggle became the dominant mode of legitimacy, and those with weapons became the new governing elite. Soviet and Cuban advisors helped institutionalize this structure, training officers not merely in combat, but in ideological discipline and counterintelligence. Political education in the barracks ensured that

loyalty to the ruling party was inseparable from service in the army. The party became an extension of military authority, and the military a guardian of the party.

This fusion of party, state, and army did not empower the masses—it suppressed them. The revolutionary potential of workers, peasants, and students was redirected into managed channels. Participation was allowed, but only within the limits prescribed by the state. Revolutionary committees and popular militias, where they existed, were quickly brought under centralized control. Dissenting views were denounced as sabotage, and alternative socialist visions—especially those rooted in grassroots democracy or worker self-management—were systematically excluded. Soviet and Cuban influence, rather than opening space for diversity within the socialist tradition, helped close it.

Dependency was another lasting consequence. The economies of these African regimes, devastated by colonialism and shaped by extractive structures, were further constrained by their reliance on Soviet and Cuban aid. Industrial development followed state-led models that depended heavily on foreign assistance, technological imports, and centralized coordination. When aid declined in the late 1980s, these economies crumbled under debt, inefficiency, and stagnation. The dream of self-reliance gave way to desperation, and many regimes were forced to abandon Marxist rhetoric in exchange for Western loans—without ever democratizing their internal power structures.

Thus, while Soviet and Cuban support offered material advantages and helped sustain newly independent states against imperialist pressure, it also transmitted a model of socialism that was bureaucratic, militarized, and top-down. It discouraged independent political thought, reinforced the primacy of the ruling party, and turned the working class into subjects rather than agents of revolution. What was imported was not the spirit of Marx’s call for self-emancipation, but the mechanisms of Stalinist control adapted for African conditions.

The next page will explore how, despite abandoning formal socialism in the 1990s, these states retained the political DNA of their earlier systems. The parties stayed in power, the militarized bureaucracies remained intact, and the working class continued to be governed rather than empowered—all under a new banner of market reform and “democratic transition.”

The promises made by Africa’s postcolonial Marxist-Leninist regimes were ambitious: food security, economic modernization, national unity, and popular empowerment. But by the 1980s, many of these same countries were engulfed in famine, civil war, or deep internal unrest. While colonial underdevelopment and global economic pressures played significant roles, the internal architecture of these states—their centralized command structures, rigid party hierarchies, and suppression of democratic initiative—amplified crisis rather than prevented it. What had been framed as revolutionary governance became, in practice, a machinery incapable of self-correction, locked in authoritarian system even as catastrophe unfolded.

Ethiopia under the Derg regime offers a stark example. After declaring a Marxist-Leninist orientation in 1974, the military junta centralized all decision-making, dismantled

independent peasant associations, and imposed collectivization programs without democratic input. Land reform, while sweeping, was top-down, with no space for local adaptation or community oversight. In the 1980s, as famine ravaged the northern provinces, the state responded not with transparency or flexibility, but with denial and force. Food aid was obstructed by political concerns. The regime's infamous resettlement and villagization programs, justified as socialist development, uprooted millions and deepened the humanitarian crisis. The use of food as a tool of war—deliberately withholding it from rebel-held regions—turned natural drought into man-made disaster. The famine of 1983–1985, which killed over one million people, was not simply a failure of agriculture—it was a failure of authoritarian governance dressed in socialist rhetoric.

In Angola, the MPLA's highly centralized structure struggled to adapt to the realities of a prolonged civil war. The state's economic planning apparatus, inherited from Soviet models, lacked flexibility and responsiveness. Resources were funneled into military expenditure rather than public welfare. Political loyalty was prioritized over competence, and dissenting voices—whether from within the party or from grassroots communities—were silenced. This rigidity created a brittle state apparatus, incapable of addressing local needs or negotiating sustainable peace. As the civil war dragged on for decades, the population bore the cost: massive displacement, destroyed infrastructure, and widespread poverty in a country rich with oil and resources.

Mozambique experienced similar dysfunction. FRELIMO's revolutionary government implemented collectivized agriculture and village consolidation, often without adequate infrastructure or popular consultation. As in Ethiopia, these efforts were intended to create a new socialist citizenry, but in practice, they disrupted food production and alienated the rural population. The party's intolerance of dissent meant that early warnings and critical feedback were ignored. When RENAMO, a Western- and apartheid-backed counterinsurgency force, launched a brutal civil war, the government responded by deepening central control and military mobilization. Entire regions were caught between two authoritarian forces: one claiming the mantle of socialism, the other of anti-communism—neither accountable to the people trapped in between.

In Guinea, Sékou Touré's one-party regime reacted to perceived threats not with openness, but with purges and repression. As the economy deteriorated, the government cracked down harder on internal dissent, fueling cycles of unrest and retaliation. Secret detentions, political executions, and the erosion of trust between state and society created a climate where economic crisis quickly became political crisis. When productivity fell, the regime blamed sabotage; when shortages occurred, they imposed stricter discipline. A system built on fear could not engage in self-critique, and so every failure was compounded by ideological rigidity.

Somalia's Siad Barre faced similar contradictions. Though his government declared a path of scientific socialism, its foundations rested on clan patronage and military coercion. Development programs were imposed without addressing clan dynamics or regional disparities. When civil resistance mounted in the 1980s, the state responded with brutal

repression—bombing cities like Hargeisa into rubble and triggering massive refugee flows. The collapse of the regime in 1991 did not lead to democracy, but to fragmentation and war, proving that centralization without genuine participation leads not to order but to decay.

In each of these cases, the Stalinist legacy of unaccountable planning and ideological uniformity rendered the state unable to respond to crisis with humanity or adaptability. War and famine became not just the result of external enemies or environmental conditions, but the direct consequence of political structures that denied people voice, transparency, and agency. By criminalizing dissent and elevating party loyalty above material outcomes, these regimes allowed disaster to flourish under the guise of discipline.

The next and final page of this chapter will turn to the post-1990 period, when many of these regimes abandoned Marxist slogans under international pressure—but retained the centralized power structures and elite dominance they had inherited from their so-called socialist past. The ideologies changed, but the pattern of rule endured, revealing that the core problem was not Marxism itself, but its betrayal.

The wave of African regimes that rose to power in the name of Marxism did not fulfill the vision set out by Marx and Engels. They did not create a classless society, nor did they lay the groundwork for the withering away of the state. Instead, they gave birth to new hierarchies, new elites, and new systems of domination that contradicted the very foundation of socialist thought. What emerged across much of the continent was not the emancipation of the working class, but the consolidation of state power in the hands of party-military bureaucracies—groups that ruled not with the people, but over them.

The post-independence Marxist-Leninist parties of Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, Benin, Congo-Brazzaville, and Somalia built states that inherited the colonial machinery of command and merely changed its outward appearance. National flags replaced imperial ones, revolutionary slogans replaced colonial decrees, but the social and political order remained vertical. Authority flowed from the top. The party was proclaimed infallible, the state sacrosanct, and the people—despite being declared sovereign—were rendered subjects rather than active agents in history.

These regimes produced new elites who used state structures for their own preservation. These were not capitalist bourgeois in the classical sense, but bureaucratic classes with their own privileges, access to wealth, and control over the means of distribution. Their authority was secured not through market competition, but through political loyalty, military strength, and the silencing of dissent. They occupied state ministries, commanded security forces, and managed the nationalized economies with little input from the workers and peasants they claimed to represent. Thus, class society persisted—not through private capital, but through centralized state ownership without democratic oversight. The oppression remained; only its justification changed.

Marx and Engels never envisioned socialism as a new form of state power, but as its transcendence. The dictatorship of the proletariat was to be a transitional phase marked by radical democracy, mass participation, and the dismantling of class divisions. In Africa,

however, socialism was reduced to a party program—one enforced by coercion, insulated from critique, and divorced from grassroots control. What was called “scientific socialism” became a dogma imposed from above, not a living process driven by the working class.

Even when these regimes began to renounce Marxism-Leninism in the 1990s under pressure from international lenders and shifting global tides, they did not dismantle the structures of authoritarian rule. The names of the parties changed, their slogans softened, and market reforms were adopted. Yet the same men—and often the very same party networks—remained in control. They welcomed investors, spoke the language of liberalism, and conducted elections that rarely threatened the entrenched order. The ideology shifted, but the ruling class remained.

This enduring continuity reveals a deeper truth: the betrayal of socialism in Africa was not a result of Marxist principles, but of their abandonment. The ruling elites used the language of class struggle to claim legitimacy while erecting systems that shielded them from accountability and preserved inequality. These regimes did not collapse because socialism failed—they collapsed because they never practiced it. They inherited the worst of Stalinist methods and mixed them with colonial legacies of domination.

In the end, the working class remained marginalized. The peasants remained voiceless. The state, far from withering, became more entrenched. These regimes offer not a judgment against Marx, but a confirmation of his warnings: that power, once consolidated in a privileged few, will not dissolve on its own. The next chapter will explore the contrast between these betrayals and the core values of socialism—reaffirming Marx and Engels’ call for proletarian democracy, the abolition of all forms of class domination, and the construction of a truly emancipated society.

Post-1990: The Colors Change but the Chains Remain

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the symbolic death of an era. Across the globe, governments that had once pledged loyalty to Marxism-Leninism began to shed the ideological skin that no longer served them. In Africa, the impact was immediate and widespread. States once proud to call themselves “People’s Republics” began rebranding as “democracies.” Marxist slogans were replaced with language borrowed from liberal capitalism—reform, markets, development, and governance. The hammer and sickle disappeared from flags and party platforms. But these transformations were more aesthetic than structural. The same elites who had ruled under the red banner now presided over the transition to so-called democracy and market reform. The uniforms changed, but the system of control remained intact.

In countries like Ethiopia, Angola, and Mozambique, the ruling parties abandoned Marxist language and adopted new ideological garb, often with the encouragement of international institutions and Western donors. Yet the power remained concentrated in the same hands. The party cadres who once justified their rule through “scientific socialism” now spoke of “developmental states” and “national growth.” The secret police agencies were renamed but continued to function. The military hierarchies remained untouched. Political opposition was permitted on paper but was often harassed, co-opted, or sidelined in practice. Elections became regular, but rarely competitive. Democracy was performed, not practiced.

In Ethiopia, the fall of the Derg gave way to the rule of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition built from the armed resistance that overthrew the military junta. Though the EPRDF formally dropped Marxist language, it inherited the Derg's centralized administrative apparatus and state-security structures. It governed with a tight grip, organizing elections while controlling the media, the courts, and civil society. Opposition parties were tolerated only when they posed no real threat, and protests were met with repression. The system of governance—top-down, security-driven, resistant to dissent—did not dissolve with the fall of the Marxist label.

Angola followed a similar path. The MPLA formally renounced Marxism-Leninism in 1991, revised the constitution, and welcomed foreign investment, particularly in oil and mining. But political power remained within the same elite circles. The economy was liberalized selectively, in ways that enriched the ruling class while maintaining tight control over the state apparatus. Elections were introduced, but opposition parties were marginalized through legal, financial, and administrative barriers. The military and security forces continued to serve as the backbone of the regime's authority, and dissent—particularly from civil society and journalists—was treated as subversion.

In Mozambique, FRELIMO likewise abandoned Marxism by name but retained its dominant position in state institutions. The political opening of the 1990s was carefully managed to ensure continuity rather than rupture. Former party functionaries became businessmen. The privatization of state assets created a new capitalist class drawn directly from the ranks of the old political elite. Former Marxist revolutionaries became the stewards of neoliberal reforms. Land and resources that had once been declared the property of the people were now transferred into private hands—with profits flowing upward, not outward.

Benin is often cited as a successful case of peaceful democratic transition. And indeed, it introduced multiparty elections, and its former military ruler Mathieu Kérékou even lost power through the ballot box. But even here, the networks of patronage, the culture of centralized authority, and the political dominance of old elites remained deeply embedded. Kérékou returned to power in the 1990s, this time as a civilian president—repackaged for a new era. The shift in rhetoric did not undo the decades of centralized rule. It merely refashioned them for global consumption.

What unites these post-1990 transformations is the persistence of class domination beneath the surface of political change. The working class was never truly empowered—either under the so-called Marxist regimes or under their democratic successors. The revolutions of the

past were rebranded, not realized. The forms of political control became more subtle, more performative, more internationally acceptable—but their purpose remained: to preserve the position of those who had come to rule in the name of the people, while ensuring that the people themselves remained subjects, not sovereigns.

This page marks the beginning of a new chapter in the betrayal of socialism—not through repression wrapped in red banners, but through reform wrapped in democratic slogans. As the next pages will show, the enduring structures of control—security services, centralized parties, economic elites—continue to function as barriers to genuine emancipation. The language of socialism may have been discarded, but the chains forged during the one-party era were never broken.

With the fall of the Soviet Union and the ideological collapse of global Marxism-Leninism, many African regimes that had once styled themselves as revolutionary socialist states began a rapid and seemingly sweeping transformation. Constitutions were rewritten, elections were introduced, and former “vanguard parties” dropped their socialist labels in favor of democratic and market-friendly language. But beneath this surface of reform, the actual structures of power remained largely intact. The very parties that had governed through one-party rule continued to dominate the political arena—no longer as self-declared Marxist-Leninist parties, but as deeply entrenched political machines built on decades of control over state resources, security forces, and bureaucratic networks. The revolution had ended—not in rupture, but in continuity.

In Angola, the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), which had declared itself a Marxist-Leninist party in the mid-1970s, formally abandoned socialism in 1991. But this was a strategic shift, not an ideological reckoning. The MPLA maintained its control over the state apparatus, military command, and national economy—particularly through the oil sector, which became the regime’s central pillar. The party elite, many of whom had built their careers under the revolutionary banner, rebranded themselves as reformers and businessmen. Privatization of state assets created new avenues of enrichment for MPLA insiders, while opposition remained marginal and highly constrained. Elections were held, but the conditions were never free or equal. The MPLA continued to rule unbroken, converting its former revolutionary legitimacy into capitalist managerial authority.

Mozambique’s FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique) followed a near-identical pattern. After formally dropping Marxism-Leninism in 1990, FRELIMO embraced a liberal democratic framework while preserving its monopoly on real political and economic power. The transition was orderly and celebrated in diplomatic circles, but it left the foundations of authoritarian control untouched. FRELIMO elites controlled the key ministries, the armed forces, and the major institutions of civil society. Like the MPLA, they navigated the global shift by turning state-managed socialism into elite-driven capitalism. A new political class emerged, composed of former party officials turned private sector magnates—positioned perfectly to benefit from privatization and donor-funded “reforms.” Opposition parties were permitted, but political competition remained tilted through access to state media, security

services, and bureaucratic influence. What changed was not who ruled, but how they justified their rule.

In Ethiopia, the fall of the Derg in 1991 led to the rise of the EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front), a coalition led by former guerrilla fighters from the Tigray People's Liberation Front. Though it framed itself as a break from the military dictatorship, the EPRDF continued many of the Derg's methods: centralized rule, surveillance, and suppression of dissent. While the party spoke the language of federalism and ethnic self-determination, in practice it concentrated authority in a tight core of leadership, dominated by party-military networks. It controlled the media, the courts, and the national economy. Elections were held regularly but became exercises in reaffirming the EPRDF's dominance. Dissent was managed through security crackdowns, legal obstacles, and administrative exclusion. As in Angola and Mozambique, the shift away from Marxist slogans did not signal a move toward mass empowerment—it simply exchanged ideological rigidity for technocratic authoritarianism.

In Congo-Brazzaville, the continuity of rule was even more direct. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, who had once led the country as head of the Marxist-Leninist Congolese Labor Party (PCT), returned to power in the 1990s after a brief period of multiparty reform. He restored the PCT to dominance and governed with the same authoritarian instincts that defined his earlier rule. The flag and the national anthem changed, but the mechanisms of power remained. Sassou-Nguesso secured control through a mixture of patronage, repression, and constitutional manipulation—extending his presidency well into the 21st century. The Congolese Labor Party remains the central political force, not because of popular mandate, but because of its institutional stranglehold over the state.

Across these cases, the ruling parties mastered the art of survival. By abandoning Marxism when it ceased to serve them and adopting the language of democracy when it became necessary, they secured continuity without confrontation. They retained control over the levers of power—military, administrative, economic—and ensured that the institutions of the state remained loyal to the party above the people. Elections became mechanisms of legitimation, not instruments of transformation.

What endured was not socialism, nor even the pretense of it, but the party-state system—a structure of rule in which a narrow elite governs in the name of the people while remaining insulated from their demands. These were not revolutions in retreat; they were revolutions betrayed. As the next pages will show, this betrayal is not simply historical—it defines the present, and continues to obstruct any path toward genuine democratic socialism.

With the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the retreat of state socialism, African regimes that had once declared themselves Marxist-Leninist quickly shifted course. But this pivot did not return power to the people or open up democratic space for the working class. Instead, it ushered in a new era of elite-managed capitalism—wrapped in the language of liberal reform but structured around the preservation of authoritarian control. Privatization became the vehicle through which former revolutionary elites entrenched their positions, foreign investment was welcomed not to develop the productive capacities of society but to enrich a

new bourgeoisie, and political stability was redefined to mean the uninterrupted dominance of those who had ruled through one-party systems.

In Angola, the transition from socialism to capitalism was orchestrated entirely from within the ruling MPLA. As state-owned enterprises were privatized, they were not handed over to worker cooperatives or subjected to public oversight, but parceled out to party insiders, military commanders, and politically connected businessmen. Angola's vast oil wealth, once rhetorically declared the property of the people, was effectively captured by a narrow clique surrounding the presidency. Foreign companies, particularly in the oil and construction sectors, were given access in exchange for partnerships with local elites. This elite pact between multinational capital and the ruling class transformed Angola into a showcase of authoritarian capitalism: rapid GDP growth for a decade, alongside staggering inequality, widespread poverty, and no meaningful redistribution of power or wealth. The masses remained excluded from decision-making, while the MPLA used oil revenues to fund its own political machinery.

Mozambique followed a comparable path. After FRELIMO's abandonment of Marxism-Leninism, privatization swept through the economy in waves, overseen by the same bureaucratic structures that had once administered state property. Former party officials moved seamlessly into business roles, leveraging their connections to acquire newly privatized enterprises. International financial institutions, particularly the IMF and World Bank, promoted structural adjustment programs that emphasized liberalization, deregulation, and austerity. But these reforms did not democratize the economy—they concentrated it. Land grabs, corruption, and opaque contracts became features of the new economy. Meanwhile, the formal political system remained tightly controlled by FRELIMO, which maintained dominance not through ideology, but through its unrivaled access to state resources and foreign capital.

Ethiopia's shift followed a different ideological arc but arrived at a similar result. The EPRDF, while rejecting Marxism and adopting the language of a "developmental state," engineered a tightly managed capitalist transition. Land remained officially state-owned, but de facto control was exercised by party-aligned institutions. The government encouraged foreign investment in infrastructure, agriculture, and manufacturing—particularly from China—but under conditions that prioritized regime stability over labor rights or democratic participation. Industrial parks and export zones were developed, but strikes were banned, unions were weak or state-controlled, and the working class remained voiceless. Economic growth was celebrated, but it occurred in a context of severe political repression. Authoritarianism was not a temporary cost of development—it was its foundation.

In Congo-Brazzaville, Denis Sassou-Nguesso's regime adopted capitalism not as a transformative project, but as a mechanism of regime survival. The state invited foreign oil and timber companies to invest heavily, with few conditions. Revenues were used to maintain the loyalty of the military, fund patronage networks, and suppress opposition. Privatization of state firms occurred through backroom deals, enriching those already embedded in the ruling party's orbit. While the international community labeled the regime "stable," this stability

masked a hollowed-out political sphere, widespread unemployment, and the absence of any real economic empowerment for the population.

Across these countries, the reintroduction of capitalism was not accompanied by the creation of a free public sphere, transparent institutions, or equitable economic policies. On the contrary, it was overseen by the very parties that had once claimed to build socialism, now turned into private managers of state wealth. Far from correcting the failures of their earlier command economies, they replicated the system of exclusion and control—now dressed in the language of reform and market efficiency.

The result was a fusion of authoritarian governance with capitalist accumulation. The state did not wither away; it was retooled to serve new economic functions. The old revolutionary class became a new bourgeoisie, and the language of popular struggle was replaced with technocratic euphemisms about investment climate, growth targets, and security cooperation. What remained consistent across both eras was the disempowerment of the working class. Whether under Marxist banners or capitalist reform, power stayed concentrated, unaccountable, and indifferent to the democratic aspirations of the people.

The following page will examine how this hybrid model—authoritarian in politics, capitalist in economy—relied on the continued suppression of labor, control over dissent, and the manipulation of electoral forms to maintain the illusion of legitimacy while ensuring the reality of elite rule.

The political evolution of post-Marxist African states in the decades after 1990 reveals a new governing formula: capitalism managed by former Marxists. This hybrid order fuses the authoritarian legacy of one-party socialism with the economic mechanisms of neoliberal capitalism, producing a system that sustains inequality, suppresses dissent, and centralizes control in the hands of political elites who once claimed revolutionary credentials. The same parties and leaders who had once condemned capitalism as exploitation now preside over capitalist economies while preserving many of the tools of repression they had developed during the one-party era.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Angola. The MPLA, which once pledged allegiance to Marxism-Leninism, now oversees a corporate state where oil revenues fuel elite wealth and international investment. While the economy is open to global capital, political life remains tightly controlled. The state retains its monopoly over the security apparatus, and the ruling party's grip on media, judiciary, and elections ensures that no real political challenge can take root. The result is a society formally capitalist, but managed with the methods of its past: patronage, surveillance, and authoritarian continuity. The transition was not from dictatorship to democracy, but from socialist command to oligarchic capitalism.

Mozambique's FRELIMO offers the same pattern. In the early years after independence, it styled itself as a revolutionary force, reorganizing agriculture and nationalizing industry. But since abandoning Marxism, FRELIMO has retained its dominant role in government and society while embracing foreign capital and privatization. The party structure remains vertically rigid, with decision-making concentrated in a small elite. Corruption, political

favoritism, and exclusion of dissenting voices remain commonplace. Economic liberalization has empowered a small class of former state officials and party veterans who now function as intermediaries between foreign investors and national resources. Mozambique, once governed in the name of the people, is now governed through networks of extraction and elite accommodation—still by the same party, but for different masters.

Ethiopia's EPRDF followed a "developmental state" model, emphasizing state-led capitalism under firm political control. While Marxist language was abandoned, the centralized party system and coercive tools of governance remained. The state's economic success—in roads, dams, and industrial expansion—came at the cost of political freedom and labor rights. Opposition movements were repressed, and protests met with violence. Though elections were held, outcomes were never in doubt. What emerged was not proletarian democracy, but elite-guided capitalism wrapped in nationalist rhetoric. Former revolutionaries became technocrats, ruling over a society where capital flowed and dissent was constrained.

Congo-Brazzaville stands as one of the most revealing cases. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, once the leader of a Marxist state, now presides over a country formally capitalist in its orientation but governed with the same authoritarian instincts he refined in the 1970s. The Congolese Labor Party (PCT), renamed and rebranded, continues to dominate political life. Opposition is suppressed, elections are managed, and the economy is controlled by a fusion of political and business elites. International companies operate freely in oil and mining, but under agreements that enrich the ruling class while leaving much of the population in poverty. State power is not used to democratize wealth or empower labor, but to protect the interests of those who rule.

What ties these regimes together is not ideological coherence, but structural survival. They have discarded Marxism as a guiding doctrine but retained the centralized political architecture it once supported. At the same time, they have embraced capitalist markets not as a path to shared prosperity, but as a new source of elite accumulation. The working class remains excluded from real power. Unions are weak or state-controlled. Civil society is co-opted or suppressed. Elections occur, but with outcomes largely predetermined by media dominance, legal manipulation, and administrative control.

This hybrid form—capitalist economies overseen by former Marxists—is not a transition to liberal democracy nor a reinvention of socialism. It is a consolidation of power, wrapped in new economic language but rooted in old political habits. It allows former revolutionaries to become managers of exploitation, not its enemies. It allows global capital to invest with confidence, knowing that political order will be maintained by strongmen and one-party legacies. It keeps wealth flowing upward while preaching development to the poor. And it demonstrates that ideology, once useful, can be discarded—so long as the machinery of control remains intact.

The next and final page of this chapter will reflect on the implications of this transformation. These regimes are not examples of socialism in failure; they are the result of socialism betrayed. What was once a promise of collective emancipation has been converted into a

system that preserves hierarchy, protects private wealth, and stifles democratic energy—all under the careful watch of former revolutionaries turned custodians of inequality.

The political systems that emerged in post-Marxist Africa betray not only the ideals of socialism but the basic principles of democracy. These regimes do not represent the triumph of the capitalist bourgeoisie in the classical sense, nor do they embody the rule of the proletariat. Instead, they are governed by a bureaucratic elite—composed of former revolutionaries, party loyalists, military officers, and technocrats—who cling to power not to serve a historical mission or ideological vision, but to preserve their own status. What began as projects of liberation from colonial rule and class domination have ossified into systems ruled by administrators who fear change more than injustice, and who view popular empowerment not as a goal, but as a threat.

In theory, socialism seeks to place political and economic power in the hands of the working class, abolish the exploitation inherent in private ownership, and dismantle the coercive apparatus of the state as it becomes unnecessary. Democracy, even in its limited bourgeois form, demands competitive elections, checks on executive power, and the protection of dissent. But these hybrid regimes offer neither. They have abandoned the Marxist imperative of class emancipation, while failing to construct even the most basic structures of liberal democracy. They retain the façade of both systems—declaring elections, inviting foreign investment, speaking of development—but at their core, they are organized around the reproduction of elite control.

These governments are not led by capitalists in the traditional Marxist sense—by owners of factories or financial institutions. Instead, capital serves these bureaucrats, who act as intermediaries between foreign corporations and domestic markets. They do not own the means of production directly, but they control access to it, distribute contracts, manipulate licenses, and sell influence. Their power is not entrepreneurial but administrative, rooted in their control over state machinery and their monopoly on political legitimacy. They are gatekeepers, not industrialists—managers of patronage, not producers of value.

Nor are these societies governed by workers. The masses are still excluded from the commanding heights of political and economic life. Labor unions, where they exist, are either toothless or aligned with the ruling party. Workers are denied any form of collective ownership, real political representation, or institutional power. Elections are structured to maintain the dominance of incumbent elites, with opposition fragmented, surveilled, and often criminalized. Political parties that challenge the status quo find themselves squeezed by legal obstacles, media restrictions, or targeted violence. In this arrangement, the working class exists as a rhetorical object—invoked during campaign speeches, praised during national holidays—but never allowed to speak or act as an independent force.

The bureaucratic class that rules these regimes does not operate according to ideological conviction. Its primary interest is self-preservation. Having survived the fall of socialism by adopting the language of markets and development, it has proven remarkably adaptable. It promises democracy but delivers controlled participation. It claims economic progress but consolidates wealth among a small inner circle. And it rules not through persuasion or

consent, but through the slow suffocation of alternatives—by monopolizing institutions, policing dissent, and ensuring that no challenge from below can gain momentum.

This is the ultimate betrayal—not only of socialism's emancipatory promise, but of democracy's minimal requirement: that power derives from the people. These states are not relics of Marxist error, but evidence of what occurs when revolutionary movements abandon their foundations and transform into custodians of the very hierarchies they once vowed to dismantle. They expose the danger not of socialism itself, but of its deformation—when the party substitutes itself for the people, and when the apparatus of state power is preserved long after the revolutionary moment has passed.

The chapters to come will return to Marx and Engels' writings, to recover the original meaning of socialism as a movement for the abolition of all class domination—not a new form of centralized command, but the self-organization of the working class. Against both capitalist exploitation and bureaucratic tyranny, we must reclaim the vision of socialism as freedom: not the freedom to exploit or dominate, but the freedom to live, to work, and to govern collectively—without fear, without hierarchy, and without masters.

The Myth of Progress: Capital and Control in the Global South

The dominant narrative promoted by capitalist democracies in the West insists that capitalism is the engine of global progress. According to this view, the expansion of markets, foreign investment, and liberal institutions naturally lead to prosperity, stability, and freedom in the global South. Poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment are seen as temporary setbacks—solvable through greater integration into the world economy, institutional reform, and private enterprise. Yet this story conceals more than it reveals. For the vast majority of workers and peasants in the global South, capitalist expansion has brought not emancipation but exploitation; not progress but dependency. And as Marx foresaw, the global spread of capital has only deepened the contradictions of a world system built on class domination.

Marx did not live to witness the full reach of twentieth-century imperialism, but his writings laid the foundation for understanding how capitalism expands beyond its national boundaries. In *Capital*, he demonstrated that capital is not satisfied with local accumulation—it seeks to penetrate every barrier, every frontier, every limit to its growth. It uproots traditional economies, reorganizes labor according to its system, and imposes a system of production that extracts surplus value from the many for the enrichment of the few. This expansion is not a harmonious process. It produces what Marx called "combined and uneven development," where certain regions are industrialized and integrated, while others are relegated to resource extraction, cheap labor, and chronic dependency.

In the global South—Africa, Latin America, and much of Asia—capitalism did not arrive as a partner in development but as a conqueror. Colonialism was the first form of capitalist expansion, subordinating entire continents to the economic needs of Europe. After decolonization, the system did not disappear. It evolved. What changed were the forms of

domination, not their content. Today, multinational corporations, trade agreements, and international financial institutions continue to dictate the terms of economic life in the global South. These forces demand privatization, austerity, deregulation, and investment security—all in the name of development, but all to the benefit of global capital.

This system produces immense wealth—but not for those who labor. In countries rich in oil, gas, minerals, or fertile land, profits flow outward to foreign shareholders and local elites, while workers earn subsistence wages and communities suffer environmental destruction. Global supply chains rely on low-cost labor in export zones, where union rights are suppressed and workers are treated as disposable. Agriculture is reorganized around export crops, while food insecurity grows. Public services are gutted in the name of debt repayment. What is called progress is in fact accumulation by dispossession.

Western institutions celebrate these outcomes as signs of modernization. Rising GDPs, urban megaprojects, foreign investment flows—these become the metrics of success. But for the majority of people in the global South, daily life remains marked by insecurity, exploitation, and exclusion. The capitalist world order offers no path to equality. It offers only integration into a system where power and value are controlled elsewhere. The global South is not climbing toward Western prosperity—it is trapped in a structure designed to keep it subordinate.

This myth of capitalist progress must be challenged not with nostalgia for past revolutions, but with a renewed understanding of Marx's insights into global capital. Development under capitalism is never neutral—it is class development. The same forces that enrich a minority impoverish the majority. The next pages will explore how this reality shapes the lives of workers across the global South, and why the struggle against capitalism today must be international in character, rooted in solidarity across borders, and grounded in the principle that the wealth of the world must belong to those who create it.

In the postcolonial era, direct imperial rule was replaced by a more refined mechanism of global exploitation—one in which transnational corporations operate as the primary agents of wealth extraction, and local elites act as willing intermediaries. The relationship between capital and the former colonies did not dissolve with political independence; it was restructured. Where once imperial administrators governed through military force and colonial bureaucracy, now private corporations exert power through contracts, investment portfolios, and global supply chains, backed by the legal and financial muscle of international institutions. The system of capital remains colonial in its effects: to extract as much value as possible, with as little accountability as necessary.

Multinational corporations based in the United States, Europe, and increasingly in China do not merely operate in the global South—they dominate its most strategic sectors. In resource-rich countries such as Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and Angola, oil, gas, and mineral extraction are largely controlled by foreign firms. These companies gain access to land and rights through deals struck not with local communities or democratic institutions, but with a narrow class of state officials and business elites who profit from facilitating foreign investment. These elites—former revolutionaries, bureaucrats, military

leaders, or their descendants—form a domestic comprador class that mediates between global capital and local labor, securing the terms of exploitation in exchange for a share of the spoils.

The effects are systematic and visible. Foreign mining companies extract coltan, gold, copper, and rare earth minerals with little regard for environmental devastation or labor safety. Agricultural corporations acquire vast tracts of land—so-called “land grabs”—displacing small farmers to grow export crops or biofuels for foreign markets. Infrastructure projects, heavily promoted by Western and Chinese investors, are constructed not to connect communities or foster domestic industry, but to facilitate the movement of raw materials to ports for export. Profits are repatriated abroad, while debts remain local. Tax avoidance schemes, sweetheart deals, and profit-shifting ensure that even countries rich in natural resources remain fiscally dependent on foreign loans and aid.

Local elites benefit not by producing value but by managing access. They control permits, licenses, and military or police enforcement. They oversee state-owned companies that serve as joint venture partners with multinationals, taking commissions or board positions. In many cases, they own private firms that operate as subcontractors or logistics providers for the foreign investors. Their wealth is tied not to national development, but to their ability to secure foreign capital and suppress local resistance. These are not capitalists in the classical sense, nor socialists in any meaningful one—they are political brokers of capital, ruling not through productive labor but through their proximity to the machinery of extraction.

Meanwhile, the majority of workers and peasants remain trapped in informal labor, precarious employment, or subsistence farming. Their conditions are shaped by the needs of foreign capital, not by domestic planning or collective empowerment. Labor protections are weak or unenforced. Union organizers face harassment or violence. Environmental degradation undermines public health and traditional livelihoods. The state, which could act as a guarantor of social rights, has become a manager of investment incentives, offering tax holidays, deregulated labor zones, and police protection for corporate operations.

This alliance between transnational corporations and postcolonial elites sustains a global system of value transfer from the periphery to the core. The global South continues to export raw materials, cheap labor, and environmental sacrifice, while importing finished goods, financial obligations, and ideological justifications for its own subordination. The dream of postcolonial sovereignty has been eclipsed by the realities of neocolonial dependency.

Marx’s insight into the role of capital as a global force—breaking borders, dissolving traditions, and reshaping societies—remains essential to understanding this modern order. What is presented as partnership is in truth predation. What is called investment is too often a form of economic occupation. The next page will turn to specific mechanisms—debt, aid conditionality, and trade regimes—through which global institutions enforce this order, ensuring that even the language of development serves the needs of capital, not the emancipation of labor.

In the wake of independence and the collapse of state socialism, many nations in the global South found themselves ensnared not by invading armies or colonial governors, but by financial institutions and development agencies. The mechanisms of domination had changed in form but not in function. Debt, structural adjustment, and the rise of NGO-led development became the new instruments of control—subtler than colonial occupation, but just as effective in preserving a world order tilted in favor of capital and empire. These tools operate not through direct coercion but through conditionality, dependence, and the systematic erosion of sovereignty.

Debt became the first and most insidious chain. After the 1970s, many newly independent nations, encouraged by both Western governments and private banks, borrowed heavily to finance industrialization, infrastructure, and national development programs. But as global interest rates soared and commodity prices collapsed in the early 1980s, these debts became unpayable. The response was not forgiveness, but discipline. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank stepped in as creditors of last resort, offering bailout loans tied to “structural adjustment programs.” These programs required recipient states to slash public spending, eliminate subsidies, privatize state-owned enterprises, and liberalize trade—transforming their economies to better serve international markets rather than domestic needs.

The effects were devastating. Public healthcare and education systems were gutted. Price controls on food and fuel were lifted, triggering mass unrest. Industries built under nationalist or socialist models were sold off—often to foreign investors at bargain prices—while domestic employment shrank. The social contract was broken, replaced by a cold economic calculus that prioritized debt repayment over human welfare. These reforms did not empower working people; they disciplined them. The state, once seen as the potential vehicle for development and redistribution, was recast as a neutral administrator of market rationality—while in reality continuing to protect elite interests and foreign investors.

In tandem with debt and adjustment came a massive expansion of the NGO sector. As states withdrew from service provision under pressure from international lenders, foreign-funded non-governmental organizations rushed in to fill the vacuum. On the surface, this appeared as humanitarian progress—feeding the hungry, educating children, building clinics. But beneath this benevolent image, a deeper dynamic was at work. NGOs became instruments of parallel governance, often unaccountable to the people they served and operating under the guidance of Western donors. Their programs were shaped by donor priorities, not local needs. Their presence fragmented political mobilization by turning grassroots activism into subcontracted service delivery. They replaced political demands with project proposals.

While states were weakened, NGOs grew in strength—not to empower citizens, but to manage poverty within acceptable limits. They offered short-term relief without addressing structural causes. They functioned as buffers between suffering populations and the institutions that caused that suffering. And by presenting themselves as apolitical or neutral, they concealed the ideological nature of their work. In reality, they were deeply embedded in the apparatus of global capital, facilitating its continued expansion while containing its consequences.

This new form of rule—administered by lenders, managed by technocrats, and padded by NGOs—amounts to a modern version of colonialism. It denies the global South control over its own development path, imposes economic models crafted in the North, and substitutes foreign expertise for democratic accountability. It enforces a model of society in which growth is measured by investor confidence, not by the well-being of the population. And it ensures that any challenge to this order is met not with open repression, but with the silent withdrawal of funds, loans, and institutional legitimacy.

Marx and Engels warned that capital does not merely dominate through ownership, but through ideology and institutional form. The modern neo-colonial state, shaped by structural adjustment and surrounded by development agencies, is not a failed state—it is a successfully disciplined one. It obeys the laws of capital. It maintains order. It manages labor. It accepts limits set by others and calls it pragmatism.

The next page will expose the cultural dimension of this domination: how media, education, and ideology in the global South have been reshaped to naturalize capitalism, delegitimize alternatives, and prevent the rediscovery of radical socialist traditions that once inspired revolutionary movements across the continent.

Though separated by ideology and geopolitical alignment, both Stalinist regimes and capitalist democracies have converged in one critical respect: the suppression of grassroots socialist development. Despite their outward differences—one cloaked in red banners and the other in free market rhetoric—both systems preserve centralized authority, concentrate power in the hands of unaccountable elites, and fear the self-activity of the working class. Whether in the form of a party-state bureaucracy or a corporate oligarchy backed by international institutions, the result is the same: socialism from below is blocked, disarmed, or co-opted before it can take root.

Stalinist systems promised the dictatorship of the proletariat, but in practice they imposed the dictatorship of the party. The revolutionary energy of the working class was redirected into obedience to a centralized hierarchy that spoke in Marxist terms while betraying Marxist principles. In the Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Cambodia, and their African counterparts, the state did not wither away—it expanded. Decision-making was monopolized by political elites; dissent, even from within the left, was treated as treason. Independent workers' councils, peasant associations, and radical grassroots organizations were either absorbed into the party or crushed under accusations of “counter-revolution.” The vision of socialism as a participatory, democratic process driven by the people was replaced with five-year plans handed down from above, enforced by repression, and sanctified by official ideology.

In capitalist systems, the mechanism differs, but the effect is familiar. Political power is dispersed through institutions that appear open but are structurally closed to working-class control. Elections occur, but are dominated by corporate funding, media influence, and institutional gatekeeping. Economic life is governed not by democratic decision-making, but by the invisible hand of capital—where investment flows dictate policy, and workers are atomized within a labor market structured for their exploitation. Attempts to organize outside

this framework—through cooperatives, radical unions, or autonomous social movements—are met with financial exclusion, legal repression, or ideological delegitimization.

Both systems create a political culture that isolates individuals from collective action. Stalinist regimes do so through surveillance, propaganda, and fear of reprisal; capitalist regimes achieve the same through market dependence, media manipulation, and consumer atomization. In both, the ideal citizen is not the engaged participant in social transformation, but the obedient worker: productive, silent, and loyal—whether to the party or to the brand.

In the global South, this convergence becomes even more apparent. Many postcolonial states that once adopted the Stalinist model have since embraced capitalist reforms without changing their fundamental structure. The party remains; it simply rebrands itself. The secret police remain; they now protect foreign investors. The central plan is replaced by the donor report. The ruling class remains insulated from popular control, whether it governs in the name of the people or in the name of markets. What is feared above all is not chaos or instability—but the rise of autonomous, self-organized movements that seek to reclaim the original promise of socialism: collective ownership, horizontal power, and freedom from exploitation.

This shared hostility to grassroots socialism is not accidental. For both systems, power must be controlled from the center. The masses may be mobilized, but never empowered. They may be given symbols, but not substance. The notion that workers and peasants could govern themselves, plan their own economies, and direct the course of society stands as a direct threat to both state bureaucrats and capitalist managers alike.

Marx and Engels envisioned socialism not as a better-managed system of domination, but as the end of domination itself. They called for the proletariat to abolish all classes by abolishing itself as a class—by destroying the social relations that separate rulers from ruled, planners from workers, leaders from led. This vision is incompatible with both the bureaucratic command of Stalinism and the corporate command of capitalism. It demands not a more efficient system, but a new foundation: one built on cooperation, equality, and the self-organization of the many.

The final page of this chapter will address how these overlapping systems of control—economic, political, ideological—can be dismantled, not by returning to past models, but by recovering the emancipatory core of socialism as a living, democratic force driven by those who have been excluded from history's authorship for too long.

Whether under the command of former Marxist regimes that morphed into authoritarian developmental states or within the orbit of capitalist democracies that exert control through debt, investment, and ideology, one fact remains constant across the global South: the working class is systematically denied real democratic and economic control. Both systems—Stalinist in origin or capitalist in function—have constructed barriers that isolate the laboring majority from the decisions that shape their lives, ensuring that power remains concentrated in the hands of bureaucrats, technocrats, or business elites.

In Africa and much of the global South, the forms of political participation—elections, party politics, media engagement—exist largely as theater. In post-Stalinist states, former liberation parties monopolize the political landscape, recycling the same ruling class through nominally democratic processes. In capitalist democracies, the illusion of choice is preserved, but the outcomes remain tied to elite consensus and market approval. Whether through one-party dominance or multi-party stagnation, the essential function of the system is to maintain control, manage dissent, and prevent any structural challenge from below.

Economically, the working class is locked into dependence. State-led socialism promised collective ownership, but delivered bureaucratic control and state-enforced discipline. Neoliberal capitalism promised prosperity through markets, but delivered informal labor, precarious employment, and deepening inequality. In neither case has the majority gained ownership over the means of production or control over economic planning. Workers are reduced to tools—under central plans or investor forecasts—used to generate value, but never empowered to decide how that value is created or distributed.

What unites these systems is their hostility to bottom-up transformation. Whether in the name of revolution or development, they suppress autonomous organizing, sabotage independent unions, co-opt cooperatives, and delegitimize any form of radical democratic control. In both models, the state stands above society rather than as its expression. Decisions are made in ministries, corporate boardrooms, donor conferences, or party headquarters—not in worker assemblies, community councils, or democratic collectives. As a result, the very people whose labor builds nations, fuels economies, and sustains daily life are excluded from shaping their future.

This exclusion is not incidental—it is central to the way of both systems. In the Stalinist model, working-class power is feared because it challenges the authority of the ruling party. In the capitalist model, it is feared because it threatens profit and property. In both, the working class is allowed to suffer, to work, to vote under managed conditions—but never to rule.

Marx and Engels envisioned a different path. They did not call for a state that ruled in the name of the people, nor for a market that assigned freedom a price tag. They called for a society in which the working class emancipates itself through collective, democratic action—abolishing class society altogether. Their socialism was not another managerial system but a revolutionary rupture: the end of exploitation, the end of hierarchy, the birth of human freedom through shared control over life's essential decisions.

In the global South today, that vision remains urgent and unfulfilled. The challenge is not to choose between capitalism and authoritarian socialism, but to reject both as obstacles to liberation. The way forward lies not in reforming systems that deny the people their voice, but in building new structures rooted in participation, equality, and solidarity. The next chapter will turn toward that horizon—recovering the core of Marx and Engels' socialism and exploring how it can be reclaimed, reimagined, and rebuilt from the ground up.

The Return to Marx and Engels: Reclaiming Socialism for the Future

At the heart of the socialist project conceived by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels lies a simple, yet revolutionary proposition: the liberation of humanity from class domination. Far from a bureaucratic order or state dictatorship, their vision was one of collective self-rule, where the working class—the vast majority of society—would take direct control over the conditions of its life. They sought not to manage capitalism more fairly, nor to replace one ruling elite with another, but to abolish class society entirely. This meant uprooting the foundations of exploitation, dismantling inherited hierarchies, and reorganizing production for human need rather than private profit.

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels declared that “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” This could never be achieved in a world where a minority owns the means of production—factories, land, infrastructure, and capital—while the majority must sell their labor to survive. Thus, central to their program was the abolition of private property in the means of production. Not personal property—homes, clothes, or personal items—but the vast wealth that enables one class to live from the labor of others. In its place, they envisioned common ownership, exercised not by a distant state or party apparatus, but by the workers themselves, collectively and democratically.

They called for the end of wage labor as a system of dependence. In a society where people must work not to fulfill a shared purpose, but to survive in a market where jobs are owned and controlled by others, freedom is illusory. As Marx wrote in *Capital*, the worker under capitalism is “free” only in the sense that they are free to starve if they cannot sell their labor. True freedom, then, required the abolition of the proletariat as a class—not through extermination or repression, but by ending the class conditions that make a proletariat necessary. This meant abolishing the wage system, redistributing productive resources, and transforming the very purpose of economic life.

Equally vital was the principle of workers' democracy—not a vague commitment to majority rule, but a specific political form built from the ground up. Marx and Engels looked to historical experiences like the Paris Commune, where workers created their own institutions of governance, subject to immediate recall, bound by average wages, and accountable to those they represented. These were not representatives above the people, but extensions of the people's will. Power was to be held locally and collectively, federated from below rather than imposed from above. For Marx and Engels, the role of the state was not to become a permanent authority, but to serve as a temporary mechanism for dismantling the old order—eventually giving way to a stateless, classless society.

They were clear: socialism was not merely a new economic system, but a total transformation of social relations. It meant the end of oppression in all its forms—economic, political, racial, patriarchal—and the creation of a world in which human beings could develop freely, in cooperation with others, rather than in competition for survival. It meant education, healthcare, housing, and meaningful work as universal rights, not commodities. It meant an

end to alienation—a reconnection between the individual and the collective, between labor and life.

This vision has been distorted, buried under bureaucratic regimes that ruled in socialism's name and co-opted by liberal systems that hollowed it of substance. But its core remains as relevant today as it was in the nineteenth century. In this final chapter, we return not just to the writings of Marx and Engels, but to the spirit of their revolutionary humanism: the belief that ordinary people, through their own conscious activity, can transform the world—not by trusting elites, but by organizing to take power into their own hands. The coming pages will explore how this vision can once again become the foundation of a renewed socialist movement, free from both Stalinist authoritarianism and capitalist delusion.

To reclaim socialism as Marx and Engels envisioned it, we must first strip away the false images left by regimes that spoke in their name but acted in their betrayal. Real socialism is not centralized tyranny, nor is it welfare capitalism under a red banner. It is a living, participatory system rooted in the direct control of the working class over all aspects of social and economic life. It is built on foundations that make domination—whether by capital, state, or bureaucracy—impossible. At its core are four essential pillars: workers' councils, democratic planning, international solidarity, and the eventual disappearance of the state.

The first and most vital institution of real socialism is the **workers' council**, or what Marx referred to in practice through his praise of the Paris Commune. Councils are assemblies of workers organized at the level of the workplace, community, or region, where decisions about production, distribution, and social priorities are made democratically. These councils are not advisory bodies or symbolic forms of participation. They are the very means through which power is exercised—without hierarchy, coercion, or separation between rulers and ruled. Delegates are elected, recallable at any time, and bound by the mandates of those who choose them. In this system, politics is no longer an arena for professional politicians, but a collective process embedded in daily life.

Second, socialism means democratic planning of the economy—not through bureaucratic decree from above, but through open deliberation about social needs and priorities. Rather than the chaos and cruelty of market anarchy, or the rigid commands of state plans, democratic planning allows communities and workers to decide what is produced, how resources are allocated, and what labor is socially necessary. Planning in socialism is not simply technical—it is moral and political. It requires discussion about environmental sustainability, equality, care work, cultural production, and the balance between individual and collective needs. It affirms that an economy is not a machine but a human construction, to be reshaped by those who live within it.

Third, socialism cannot be national. It must be rooted in international solidarity, as Marx and Engels emphasized from their earliest writings. “Workers of all countries, unite!” was not a slogan—it was a strategic necessity. Capitalism is global, and any attempt to build socialism in isolation is vulnerable to both economic siege and ideological retreat. Real socialism supports struggles wherever they arise, resists imperialist domination in all forms, and builds connections between workers across borders. It rejects both nationalism and great-power

chauvinism, insisting that freedom for one cannot exist without freedom for all. It means opposing both capitalist imperialism and bureaucratic expansionism disguised as socialist internationalism.

Finally, and perhaps most misunderstood, real socialism envisions the disappearance of the state. Unlike Stalinist doctrine, which elevated the state into a permanent god-like authority, Marx saw the state as a temporary tool—necessary only as long as class conflict persisted. Once classes are abolished, and society is organized collectively and consciously, the coercive functions of the state—its military, prisons, secret police, bureaucracies—are no longer needed. As Engels wrote, “The state is not abolished, it withers away.” This does not mean the collapse of organization, but the transformation of administration into democratic coordination—without violence, without compulsion, without a separate class of governors. True socialism is not statist—it is anti-statist. Its goal is not more efficient government, but the social conditions that make government obsolete.

These principles are not abstract. They have emerged, briefly and imperfectly, in moments of real revolutionary experimentation: the Paris Commune, the Russian Soviets of 1917 before the rise of Stalinism, the workers' councils in Hungary in 1956, Chile's Cordones Industriales in 1972–73, and the radical cooperative movements in various parts of the global South. Each showed glimpses of what is possible when power is taken from above and rooted in the everyday lives of working people. Each was suppressed—by capitalist violence, Stalinist betrayal, or imperialist intervention.

But these experiences remain lessons, not failures. They remind us that socialism is not a formula but a process. It lives not in the plans of elites but in the capacity of ordinary people to act collectively, to decide freely, and to build institutions that reflect their needs and desires. As we return to Marx and Engels, we are not returning to dogma. We are returning to a method, a spirit of revolt, and a commitment to a world beyond exploitation and domination—a world only the working class itself can build. The next page will explore how this vision must be rooted in current conditions, and what strategies are needed to revive socialism as a living force in our time.

The vision of socialism that Marx and Engels laid out—a society without classes, without exploitation, without the state as a coercive force—has never been realized. This is not because their vision was utopian or flawed, but because every attempt to enact it has been obstructed, co-opted, or crushed by systems committed to preserving power: capitalist democracies on one hand, and Stalinist regimes on the other. Each, in its own way, represents the corruption of socialism—not its failure, but its distortion at the hands of forces determined to bend collective aspirations into tools of domination.

Capitalist democracies present themselves as the ultimate defenders of freedom and progress, but what they have consistently delivered is a freedom tailored to the needs of capital. The right to vote is guaranteed, but only within a narrow framework where corporate money dictates who can run, what policies are acceptable, and which voices are amplified or silenced. The economy remains in private hands, governed by profit and competition, not human need or democratic control. Inequality deepens as corporations accumulate

unprecedented power and working people are reduced to a market commodity—traded, discarded, and disciplined. These societies celebrate individual rights while denying the material conditions that make those rights meaningful for the majority. The promise of democracy exists in law, but not in lived reality. For Marx and Engels, such a society remains a class dictatorship—rule by the bourgeoisie cloaked in procedural legitimacy.

Stalinist regimes, in contrast, seized the name of socialism and drained it of all substance. Under banners bearing Marx's name, they established rigid hierarchies, elevated a single party above the people, and created states where dissent was criminalized and the working class was reduced to a silent tool of national development. The Soviet Union under Stalin, Maoist China, and their imitators in Africa and Asia adopted centralized planning not as a method of collective control, but as a system of bureaucratic command. They eliminated private capital, but replaced it with state ownership managed by an elite class that monopolized decision-making and crushed independent organization. These were not workers' states in any Marxist sense—they were party-states, governed by their own survival, not by the emancipation of labor.

Both systems, in their separate ways, deny the core principle of socialism: that the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself. In capitalist democracies, workers are told that real power lies in the marketplace and that any attempt to question private ownership is a threat to freedom. In Stalinist regimes, workers are told that the party knows best, and that their role is to obey, sacrifice, and serve the plan. In both cases, power is externalized and abstracted—placed above society rather than rooted within it. Decisions are made elsewhere, enforced from above, and justified through myths of stability, progress, or national destiny.

These betrayals have poisoned the word socialism in the global imagination. One side reduces it to government welfare within a capitalist framework; the other equates it with authoritarianism, censorship, and militarized rule. Yet neither of these systems has anything to do with the vision Marx and Engels articulated. Their socialism was not about replacing private bosses with state bosses, nor about distributing crumbs from above. It was about the total transformation of social life, beginning with the transfer of power to those who labor—not as passive recipients, but as active agents.

The contradiction lies in power itself—who holds it, how it is exercised, and for whose benefit. When socialism becomes a means to preserve power rather than dissolve it, it ceases to be socialism. When democracy is reduced to procedure without substance, it ceases to be democracy. And when revolution is carried out without the masses—not with them and by them—it becomes its opposite.

The next page will look to the future, arguing that socialism must be rebuilt from the ground up: rooted in struggle, reconnected to working-class life, and uncompromising in its rejection of all forms of domination. In doing so, we do not begin from scratch—we return to the real foundations, long obscured, waiting to be reclaimed.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels laid bare a profound insight: the ruling ideas of any epoch are the ideas of its ruling class. These ideas do not arise from timeless truths or philosophical abstractions; they are forged in the crucible of material conditions, designed to justify and preserve existing social relations. Ideology, in this sense, is not simply mistaken thought—it is a systematic distortion of reality. It is the veil that conceals the exploitation inherent in everyday life, transforming class rule into common sense, hierarchy into necessity, and injustice into order. For socialism to remain true to its emancipatory purpose, it must begin not with idealist illusions or grand proclamations, but with the material realities of human existence—and it must never lose itself in the myths created to protect power.

Marx's critique of ideology was not merely philosophical—it was political. He rejected the notion that ideas shape history on their own. Rather, ideas are produced by real people, under real social conditions, shaped by the division of labor and the ownership of property. In societies divided into classes, those who control material life also dominate mental life. Religion, morality, law, and economics are presented as neutral truths, when in fact they serve to stabilize a social order in which the many labor for the benefit of the few. This ideological control is as vital to class domination as any army or police force. It ensures that the exploited consent to their condition, not because they understand it, but because it is obscured by layers of mystification.

In capitalist democracies, ideology glorifies competition, individualism, and meritocracy. The worker who cannot find a job is blamed for personal failure, not systemic inequality. The capitalist who accumulates wealth is celebrated as a visionary, not seen as one who profits from the labor of others. Freedom is defined narrowly—as the right to buy, sell, and own—while the deeper freedoms of collective decision-making, security, and dignity are ignored. The media, education, and political institutions all reinforce this worldview, making it appear natural, inevitable, even moral. The ideology of capitalism functions to hide its material base: the extraction of surplus value from wage labor, the commodification of human needs, and the exploitation of labor both at home and abroad.

In Stalinist systems, a different but equally suffocating ideology emerged. Here, Marxist language was retained, but emptied of its revolutionary content. The party declared itself the voice of the proletariat, even as it silenced the working class. The state was said to be a tool of emancipation, even as it crushed independent organization. History was recast as a march toward socialism, led by infallible leaders and secured by obedience. This was not historical materialism—it was political mythology. The ruling class changed form, but not function. A new ideology rose to justify its power, draped in red but rooted in fear. Like in capitalism, ideology masked exploitation—only now the oppressors claimed to speak in the name of the oppressed.

Against both these distortions, Marx insisted that socialism must be grounded in material conditions. It must begin with how people live, work, eat, and relate to one another—not with abstract slogans or bureaucratic plans. The task of revolution is not to impose an idea onto reality, but to uncover and act upon the real contradictions of that reality. Class struggle is not a metaphor—it is a lived condition. The division between those who own and those who

labor, the alienation of people from their work and each other, the commodification of life itself—these are not ideological concepts, they are facts. Socialist movements that forget this, that become obsessed with symbols, personalities, or top-down control, lose their foundation. They cease to be movements for liberation and become mechanisms for new hierarchies.

To resist this, socialism must cultivate what Marx called a “ruthless criticism of all that exists”—not as cynicism, but as a method. It must constantly interrogate whether its practices match its principles, whether its structures empower or dominate, whether its ideas serve truth or convenience. It must be vigilant against dogma, especially when that dogma serves the interests of a new elite. The only secure ground is the lived experience of the working class, understood not through ideological mystification, but through critical analysis and democratic participation.

The final page of this chapter will return to the hope that animated Marx and Engels: that through conscious struggle, rooted in material reality and guided by solidarity, ordinary people can break the chains of both capital and command—and build a society based not on domination, but on collective freedom.

To move forward, we must look back—not with nostalgia, but with clarity. The failures of the past century—both the brutalities of Stalinist regimes and the illusions of capitalist democracies—have obscured the true content of socialism as conceived by Marx and Engels. They have turned the name into a caricature and the vision into a warning. Yet it is precisely now, in an age of growing inequality, ecological breakdown, and global disillusionment, that the revival of scientific socialism becomes not only relevant, but urgent. This revival must begin not with new dogmas or old symbols, but with the reassertion of first principles: workers' self-activity, international solidarity, and radical democracy.

Scientific socialism, as outlined in *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, is not a rigid blueprint. It is a method of understanding history through the lens of material conditions and class struggle. It sees capitalism not as the natural end of history, but as a historical phase—one marked by contradictions that generate the seeds of its own dissolution. It does not wait for justice to descend from above. It understands that the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself—without substitution by parties, bureaucracies, or professional revolutionaries who speak in the people's name while silencing their voices.

The central task is to build the institutions of workers' self-rule. This means reclaiming the workplace, the neighborhood, the commune—not as sites of compliance, but as foundations of power. It means reviving the practice of councils, assemblies, and federated structures where decisions are made collectively, transparently, and from below. It means creating a culture of political life in which every individual has not just the right to speak, but the means to act. Without this self-activity, socialism becomes hollow—either absorbed into capitalist reform or twisted into authoritarian command.

Alongside this, we must restore the thread of international solidarity. In a world shaped by global capital and imperial domination, no local struggle can endure in isolation. The strength of workers in one country is tied to the fate of workers in another. From supply chains to

climate systems, the interdependence of life demands that our politics transcend borders. The division of the international working class—by race, nationality, gender, or religion—has always served those who rule. A socialism for the future must break these barriers, linking movements across continents, recognizing that the enemy is not a nation but a system, and that freedom is indivisible.

And finally, the future demands radical democracy—not in form, but in substance. A democracy that does not end at the ballot box but begins there; that governs not through representatives shielded by privilege, but through the direct participation of the people in all spheres of life. This democracy must penetrate the economy, the workplace, the school, the home. It must displace the private tyranny of capital and the public tyranny of unaccountable states. It must make real what is now only declared: that sovereignty lies with the people—not as a slogan, but as a structure of life.

To condemn the past is not to wallow in failure. It is to clear the rubble of distortion, to bury the ruins of betrayed promises, and to open a space where the real meaning of socialism can be rediscovered. We reject the perversions that ruled in its name—not to abandon the project, but to reclaim it. We reject capitalism's hollow freedom—not to retreat, but to fight for a freedom that is full, social, and shared. We remember the dead—those crushed by the machinery of both empire and state—not to mourn endlessly, but to honor their struggle with renewed commitment.

Marx and Engels gave us a map, not a finished picture. Their socialism remains unfinished because it is a task for the living. The conditions have changed, but the challenge remains: to organize, to educate, to build, and to resist. The ruling class still rules. The workers still toil. But history is not closed. In the hands of the many lies the power to change everything.

Let us return to socialism—not as a memory, but as a movement. Not as a system, but as a promise. Not from above, but from below. And let us begin again.

Sources

The Communist Manifesto – Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1848

Capital, Volume I – Karl Marx, 1867

Socialism: Utopian and Scientific – Friedrich Engels, 1880

The German Ideology – Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1846

Critique of the Gotha Programme – Karl Marx, 1875

State and Revolution – Vladimir Lenin, 1917

The Revolution Betrayed – Leon Trotsky, 1937

Permanent Revolution – Leon Trotsky, 1930

Reform or Revolution – Rosa Luxemburg, 1899

The Accumulation of Capital – Rosa Luxemburg, 1913

Socialism and Man in Cuba – Che Guevara, 1965

The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State – Friedrich Engels, 1884

Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism – Vladimir Lenin, 1916

Blackshirts and Reds – Michael Parenti, 1997

The Wretched of the Earth – Frantz Fanon, 1961

Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism – Kwame Nkrumah, 1965

Open Veins of Latin America – Eduardo Galeano, 1971

How Europe Underdeveloped Africa – Walter Rodney, 1972

Development as Freedom – Amartya Sen, 1999

Democracy Against Capitalism – Ellen Meiksins Wood, 1995